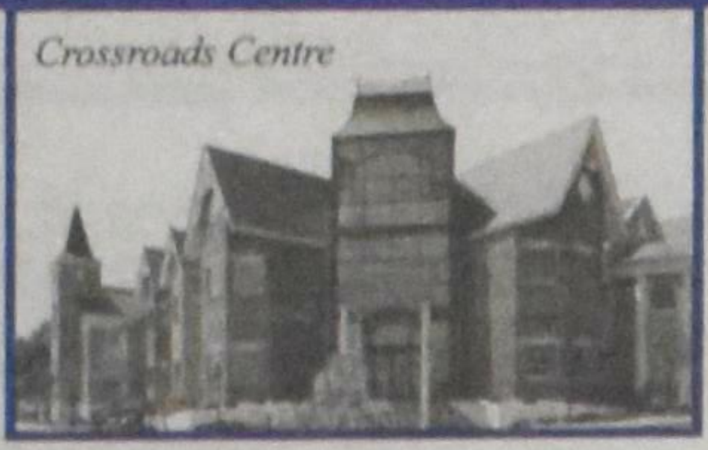

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The powerful discuss the poor:

A Christian perspective on the upcoming Summits

Stephanie Tombari

HUNTSVILLE, Ont. – For the second time this year, Canadians will welcome individuals from around the world to represent their countries in an international event. Once again, we will be leading the way to the podium.

"The G8 and G20 summits put [global poverty] front and centre in terms of Canadian consciousness," says Robyn Bright, national coordinator for Micah Challenge Canada in Ottawa. "They provide an excellent opportunity for individuals wanting to mobilize their communities and neighbours around issues of global poverty to organize awareness or organizing events."

From June 25-27, the Deerhurst Resort in Huntsville will host the annual summit for member nations of the G8: Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Russia, Italy and Canada. The G8 summit will be followed by a meeting of the G20 in Toronto. According to Bright, the key difference between the G8 and G20 is the agenda: the G8 will primarily focus on development issues, while the G20 will be looking at global financial regulations and financing for development.

Critics of the summits often argue that the members have too much power over the world economy. "Much of the power in world systems and structures is controlled by the countries that are part of these summits," says Karen Bokma, social justice manager for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) in Burlington, Ontario.

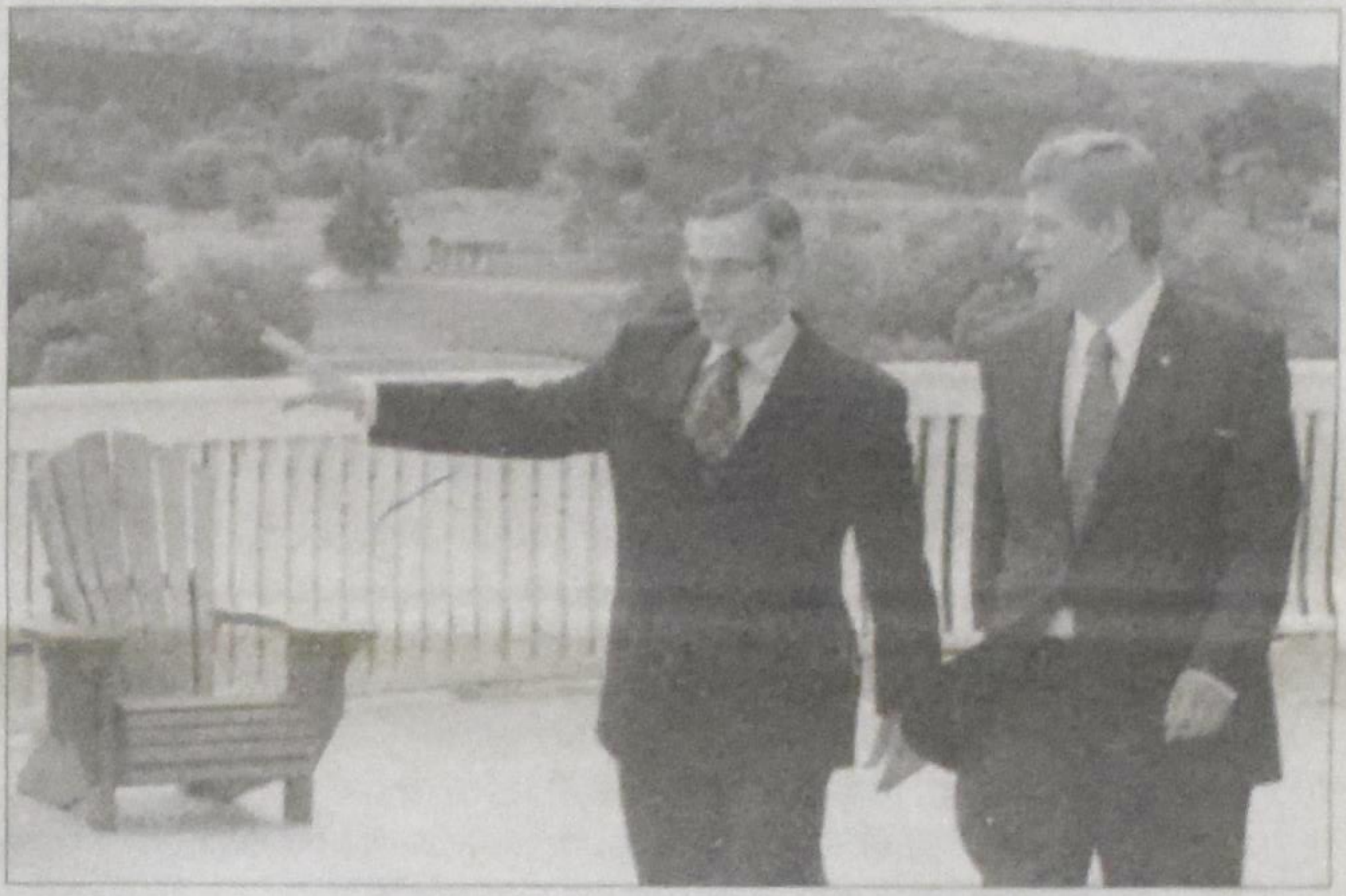
"Systems in and of themselves aren't generally good or bad, but how the power within these systems is used often needs to be addressed. The summits present a time for advocates to really push those who hold the power to do the right thing and open up access to the systems they control."

Africans left out

Last year world leaders resolved that the G20, with its growing global influence, would replace the G8 as the main economic council for wealthier countries. But Bright says there's more to be done if the needs of the poor are to be addressed. "The G20 is more representative than the G8, but it does not include significant representation from the African states," says Bright. "Right now, civil society groups that are African Union (AU) members are campaigning to include the AU in the G20. I think this would be a very positive move."

NGOs like Micah Challenge plan to take advantage of the summits' high profile by building awareness among Canadians about the Millennium Development Goals

See **Summits** *on page 2*



PM Stephen Harper and local MP prepare for G8 guests in Huntsville.

'Nazi Chic' in Europe and Asia

17-yr-old twins Lynx and Lamb sing "Nazi pop" in a white supremacist band called Prussian Blue.

Gate into Auschwitz, Hitler's true legacy.

Harold Alkema

OTTAWA, Ont.– Imagine driving down a highway and seeing a bumper sticker that reads *I like Hitler* or *I like Nazis*. Picture heading out to an eatery and having *Hitler's Cross Dinner* as one of your options. Envision a clothing store that sells t-shirts emblazoned with Hitler's portrait or perhaps a swastika. All of this is possible today – in Pakistan of all places. While this might appear odd to Westerners, it points to the renewed popularity of Adolph Hitler as historical figure and the resurgence of the radical right in Europe and Asia.

> *Economic pressures have motivated voters in Central Europe to find scapegoats among the minorities in their countries.*

Popular the world over

Currently, objects that Hitler touched or might have touched are fetching record prices at auctions. His magnum opus *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*) is selling briskly and his lesser-known artwork still fetches high prices, even though Hitler's forays into the visual and literary arts were less than successful. There is little to recommend the *Fuhrer's* paintings or writing. Winston Churchill once called *Mein Kampf* "turgid, shapeless and verbose." It is part autobiography and part political treatise, full of lies, distortions and racial invective. It is also poorly written and runs over 700 pages.

In spite of the book's failings, it is a best seller in some unexpected

See **'Nazi Chic'** *on page 2*

News

Summits *continued from page 1*

Deerhurst Resort in Huntsville

COURTESY OF EFC/FAITH TODAY

(MDGs), a set of eight development targets set by world leaders at the beginning of the century to cut extreme poverty in half by 2015.

"Micah Challenge is organizing a variety of events for the week leading up to the G8, and the weekend of the G20," says Bright. Activities include workshops on the MDGs and faith-based advocacy, a prayer service during the meetings to pray for the G8 and G20 leaders and a street presence during the G20 summit in Toronto.

All eyes on Canada (again)

While the security and cost of hosting the summits continue to be controversial, Bright says that by holding the G20 summit in Toronto instead of Huntsville, more people will be exposed to the issues on the G20 agenda, which may prompt more public action.

"I think because the summits are happening in Canada it puts an extra responsibility on Canadians to ensure they are using their voices to advocate," says Bokma. "It's an opportunity because the media will be focused on the summits. They will probably cover a lot of negative things regarding the summits, so it's also important to get positive advocacy messages included in the stories."

"The summits cause those watching to ask not only what our government should be doing, but similarly what actions we personally can take to see poverty eradicated and the MDGs achieved," says Bright.

Stephanie Tombari (contact@stephanietombari.com) is a freelance writer from Burlington, Ontario.

What can I do?

If you live in the Toronto area, Micah Challenge invites you to join in any of the activities planned for the summit. For those not in the GTA, consider organizing a prayer meeting with members of your church on June 25th or June 26th, or commit to pray for the outcomes of the G8 and G20 meetings as a church on Sunday June 20th or Sunday June 27th.

In June, Micah Challenge will also be making study guides on the MDGs available to groups in Canada. For more information, send an email to *info@micahchallenge.ca.*

'Nazi Chic' *continued from page 1*

markets. In 2001, it became a quick seller after being introduced in Bulgaria. Shortly thereafter, it became the number six bestseller after being translated into Arab and distributed in the Palestinian territories. In Turkey, *Mein Kampf* sold 100,000 copies in January and February of 2005 alone. (In that country printing and distribution of the tome is subsidized by Muslim fundamentalist organizations). The CEO of an upscale book retailer in India estimated that he sold roughly 10,000 copies in New Delhi in a six month period in 2009. Croatians have been avid consumers of Hitler's writing for many years.

Anti-Semitism and the resurgence of Hitler

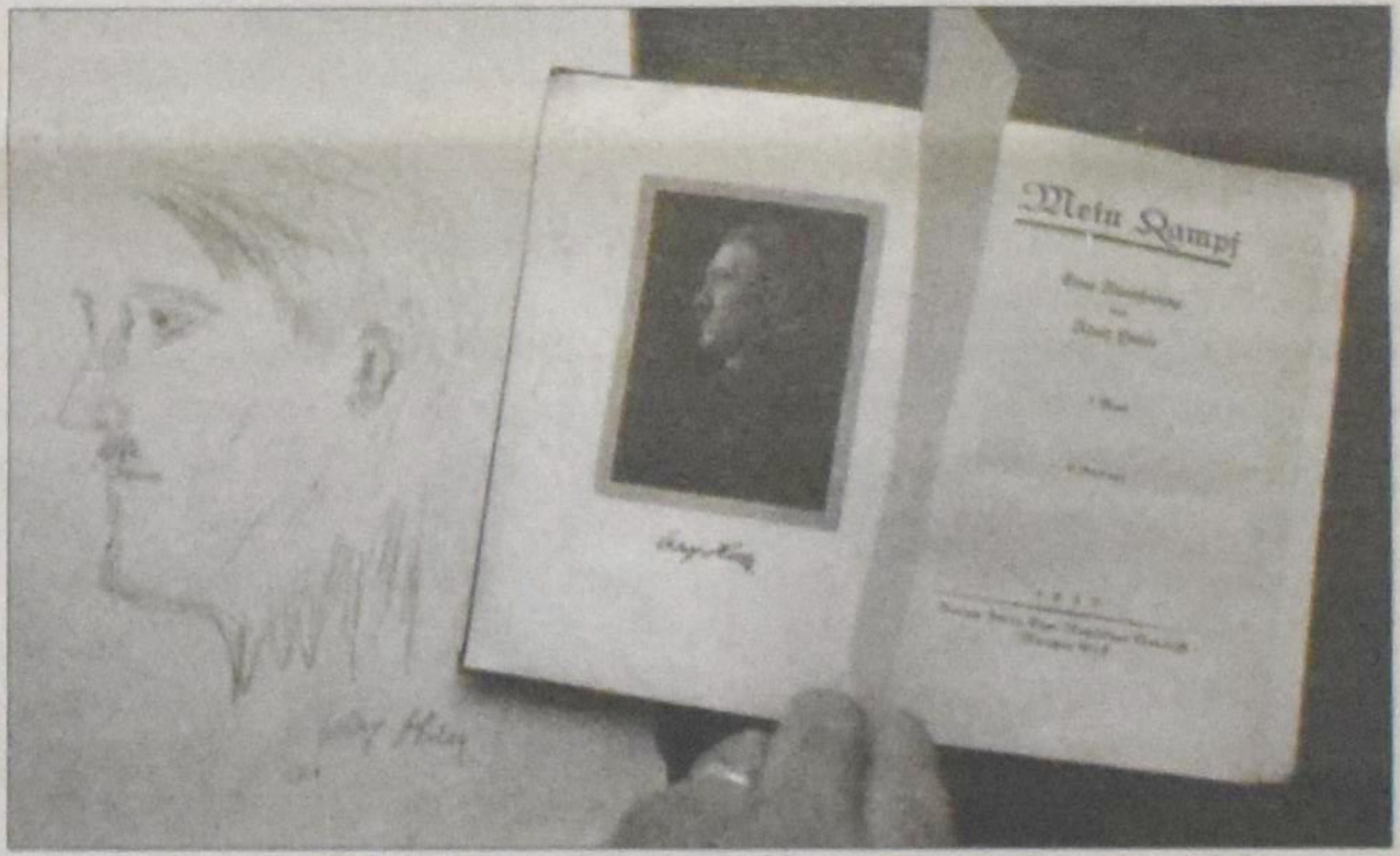
Unfortunately the most common cause of this phenomenon is easy to spot. Most of the individuals who purchase *Mein Kampf* or demonstrate their far-right sympathies in other ways are motivated by a strong sense of anti-Semitism. In Muslim countries, this is often expressed in terms of sharp disapproval for Israel's policies on Palestine. Ihas Niaz, history professor at Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad, noted that the popularity of Hitler's political and racial ideas in Pakistan is "an emotional response to what is happening in Palestine today." Maqudas Ghamman, a 21-year old student at the same school, claimed that his Nazi sympathies are a challenge to the Israeli government. In a recent interview he said, "We admire Hitler partly because we want to remind Jews about what happened to them and express our anger over what their leaders, the leaders they admire, are now doing to the Palestinians."

Neo-nazis protested the opening of a Holocaust museum in Illinois.

The Indian exception

While anti-Semitism is the driving force behind Hitler's popularity in Muslim countries, this is not the case in India. Indians have never demonstrated a great antipathy for Jewish people, but Hindu fundamentalists have latched on to Hitler's beliefs as they seek to deal with the Muslim minority in their country and the conflict with Pakistan over Kashmir. The head of the Mumbai Indian Jewish Federation stated that "[t]here is no anti-Semitism in India. It is a peculiar situation in India where we Jews have to raise worries about these Nazi tactics being used against our Muslim brethren." This anti-Muslim way of thinking has long been a part of Hindu radicalism. In 1949, an important Hindu fundamentalist thinker remarked, "[i]f you take *Mein Kampf* and if you remove the word Jew and put in the word Muslim, that is what I believe in."

Hungary's far-right Jobbik party gained power in April's elections.



A signed copy of Mein Kampf *and a self-portrait in pencil sold for $51,000 at a British auction recently.*

The European theatre

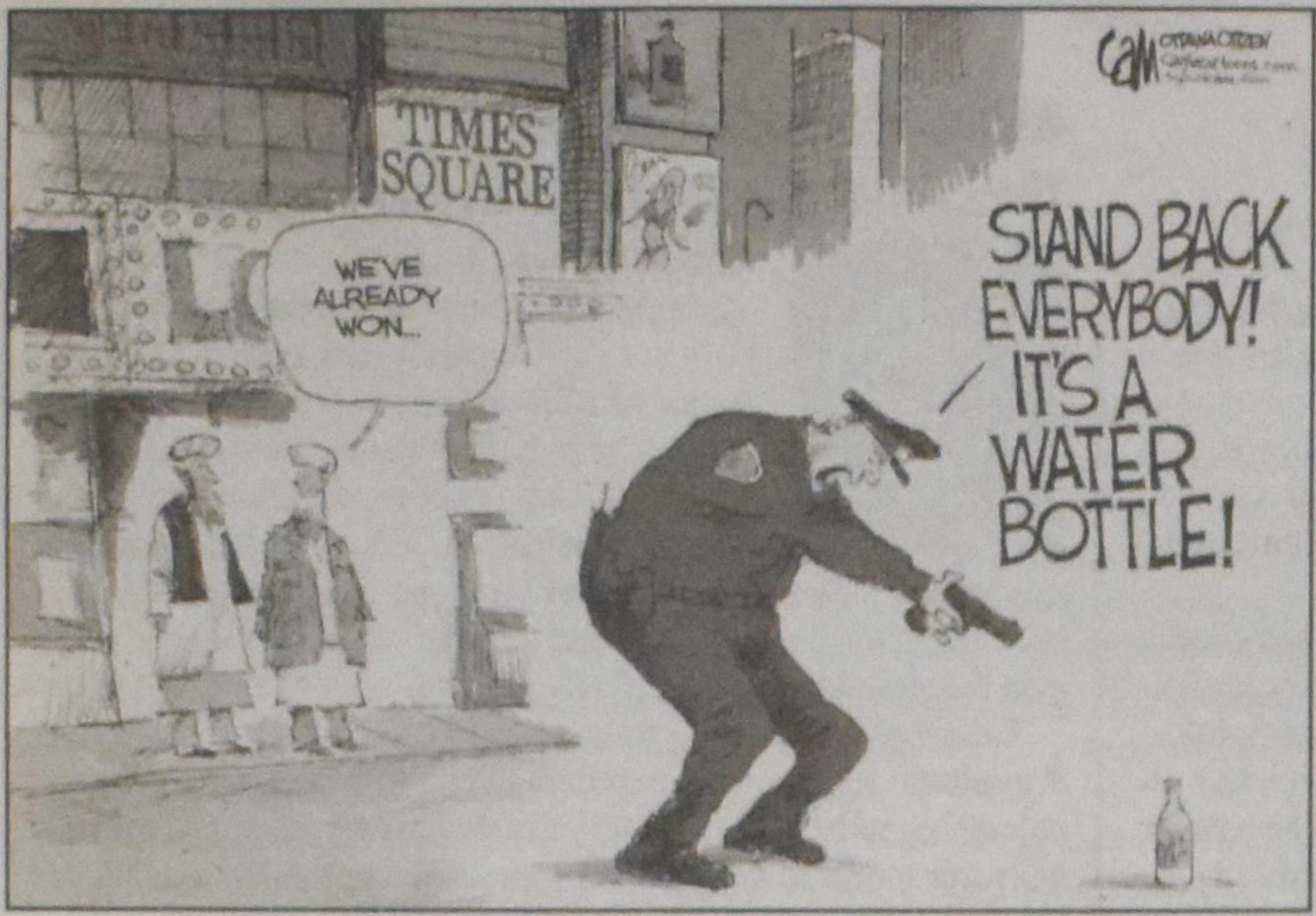
In Europe, the situation is perhaps more dire. This fact is best demonstrated in the Hungarian elections held in April. The right-wing Movement for a Better Hungary won nearly 17 percent of the vote, up from 2.2 percent in 2006. In addition, the party is currently one of the leading opposition groups in the Hungarian Parliament. Worst of all, much of their success has been gained by denouncing "Gypsy Crime" and "Jewish colonization." The party claims that it is not a neo-Nazi organization, but their paramilitary wing, the Hungarian Guard, is openly hostile to Hungary's Jewish and Roma populations. The paramilitary group is illegal but still marches publicly in black uniforms, flying white and red flags reminiscent of those carried by Hungarian Nazis from World War II. Jeffrey Kopstein, director of the Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at the University of Toronto, warns that the Hungarian Guard is patterned after the feared Arrow Cross Party of the 1940s. The Arrow Cross Guard were instrumental in carrying out the Holocaust during the Second World War.

Meanwhile, in neighbouring Austria, the ironically named far-right Freedom Party is proposing the formation of a government department that would oversee the deportation of the country's immigrant population. Clearly, the economic pressures resulting from the global economic slowdown have motivated voters in Central Europe to find scapegoats among the Jewish, Roma and immigrant minorities in their countries.

"History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce," as Karl Marx once quipped. In the case of neo-Nazism, tragedy and farce are closely related. Even though the doctrines of this outmoded ideology are illogical, even laughable, they have the power to strip people of their rights and their lives. In the previous century, more than fifty million people lost their lives in order to defeat the ideas of Hitler and his followers. Sixty-five years after Hitler's death, many have not learned the consequences of using racial hatred as solution to their everyday problems. This sad truth may be the real tragedy in the worldwide resurgence of Hitler's twisted ideals.

Harold Alkema works as a researcher with a private firm in Ottawa specializing mainly in Native Affairs and historical research.

News Commentary



Country living
Maynard van der Galien

Living in a land flowing with chocolate milk

We live in strange times. Canadian hog and cattle producers are doing very badly financially. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) says Canada's already battered farm sector "will face an extraordinary difficult year, particularly those in the cattle and hog sectors."

Although you wouldn't know it by the size of the new machinery, Canadian cash-crop farmers are not doing great and are heaping more debt upon themselves by growing bigger crops in order to survive.

Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz was in Renfrew (Ontario) last month and spoke to party faithful members and fielded questions from local farmers about excess production and low prices. Ritz cited a burgeoning Chinese economy and predicted good times for Canadian farmers. "I guarantee you, we won't be able to grow enough. Around the world the whole paradigm is shifting," he said.

The CFA say the government's own forecast show deep losses for many commodities, and they know that the business risk management programs currently in place were not designed to function with today's unique set of economic circumstances.

What about dairy?

Ritz is quoted saying, "The federal government has to be careful not to support programs which could provoke trade retaliation from key trading partners. Our government will never support a program that would bring crippling countervail suits, slam borders shut, toss international trade agreements out the window and decimate our agriculture industry."

Really? It has already happened! If federal money can't support farm programs, where does it go? Well, it's safe to throw money at research. Dairy farming is a profitable business because the returns to farmers never fluctuate. So the recent announcement that the federal government will invest up to $10 million in dairy research and food safety initiatives is interesting.

More than $8.7 million will go toward studying the health benefits of dairy products and improving systems for dairy cattle health and welfare. Dairy producers will contribute $3 million, for a total of $11.7 million to be invested in various research initiatives, including assessing the environmental impact of dairy products.

Ensuring chocolate milk does not get bumped off school menus is a major initiative DFC will focus on in the coming year. DFO said some processors have already done some work to lower the sugar content in their products, which should help keep these items in school.

The March issue of *The Milk Producer* has a photo of Ritz and Dairy Farmers of Canada president Jacques Laforge drinking a tall glass of chocolate milk to commemorate the announcement.

Wasted research

The study should find that there are many health benefits to dairy products. Milk has been a part of our nutrition since early biblical times. In Genesis 18 we read that Abraham and Sarah had visitors – three men. Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a fat calf and told a servant to hurry and butcher it. When the food was ready, he took some cheese curds and milk and the fresh roasted meat, and he served it to the men.

My mother raised her family on no-fat or low-fat pasteurized milk. She would take a small pail full of milk out of the bulk tank and let it sit overnight in the refrigerator. The next day she would skim off the cream and boil the milk in a double boiler. She did not want us to drink fatty milk.

A glass or two of milk a day is good for people of all ages. My wife and I love plain yogurt. It's always stocked in our refrigerator.

What is too sugary for my taste is chocolate milk – the brown, sweet, sugary stuff that Ritz and Laforge are seen drinking. I read the label in the store the other day and saw that chocolate milk has 28 grams of sugar per cup. And bulk tanker loads of chocolate milk are allowed to come in from the U.S. with minimal duty charged.

Oh well, governments give grants to all kinds of things so it might as well be wasted on researching milk.

Like I said, we live in strange times.

Maynard van der Galien (maynard@renfrew.net) is a Renfrew area farmer and agriculture columnist.

Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

Across the pond: coalition government

The British have just gone through a watershed election campaign that could change the politics of that country for good. The Labour government of Prime Minister Gordon Brown went into the campaign at something of a disadvantage. Brown had yet to win an election as prime minister, having taken Tony Blair's place when the latter resigned in 2007. In fact, all three major party leaders were neophytes, including the Conservatives' David Cameron and the Liberal Democrats' Nick Clegg. Clegg's performance in the televised leaders' debates was unexpectedly strong, especially considering that his party is traditionally in third place.

Once the poll numbers were in last month, the Conservatives came out ahead but failed to win an absolute majority of the seats in the House of Commons. This is, of course, an outcome that has become familiar to Canadians in recent years. However, Britons had not seen a similar result since 1974, so there were no recent precedents the parties could readily follow in the case of a "hung parliament," as it is called in the UK. When no party wins a majority here in Canada, the leading party forms a minority government and negotiates with other parties to prop it up for a time, though generally for not more than two years.

On the other hand, David Cameron decided to form a genuine coalition government with Clegg's Liberal Democrats, thus bringing the latter party into power for the first time since the Second World War. A coalition government is made up of members of both (or all) the participating parties. The only real precedent for this in Britain was the succession of all-party National Governments struck to deal with the back-to-back crises of depression and war between 1931 and 1945. How the current coalition will function in the coming years cannot be predicted, but it is now in place and set to go.

More just solution

What about Canada? The closest we have come to a coalition government on the federal level was the pro-conscription Union Government of Sir Robert Borden that lasted uneasily from 1917 to 1920. However, this was not a true coalition government, because the Liberals, as a party, were divided over whether or not to support it. As readers will recall, a year and a half ago we saw an unsuccessful attempt to unseat Stephen Harper's government by a coalition of the Liberal and New Democratic Parties, with the promised support of the Bloc Québécois. Yet many Canadians still feel that co-operation among the parties is somehow un-Canadian.

Could this attitude be changing? We no longer necessarily take our cues from Britain, as did our 19th- and early 20th-century forebears. Yet given that our constitution is "similar in principle to that of the United Kingdom" (*Constitution Act, 1867*), there is perhaps some basis for our politicians to change their attitudes towards the previously unthinkable prospect of a coalition government.

Indeed it could make for more just governance. There is something fundamentally unjust in having a majority government exercising all the prerogative powers of the Crown with well under 50 percent of the vote. Moreover, a government requiring the support of more than one party is less likely to push an overtly ideological agenda that could have negative ramifications for the public interest. While some condemn this sort of compromise as collaboration with the "enemy," it could bring more balance to the policy process, and that would be a very good thing.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and blogs at: http://firstthings.com/blogs/evangel/.

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Editorials

Pop, pulp and pap

the decline of the literate Christian

Brett Alan Dewing

In the last few years, I have become quite a fan of Dolly Parton. Specifically, her bluegrass albums of the past decade are some of the most beautiful music I've heard, and while I don't agree with all of her theology, the fearlessness of her faith is refreshing under the bushel of contemporary music. Another fond discovery of recent years is the book trading website Bookins.com. So, when I had the opportunity to trade an unwanted sewing book for a novel called *How Dolly Parton Saved My Life*, it seemed a no-brainer. Unfortunately, that instinct would prove all-too-literally true.

My mother and I like to read aloud books in which we have mutual interest. Intrigued by the title, we started the book. *How Dolly Parton Saved My Life* turns out to be the first in a presumed series about "the Jelly Jar Sisterhood," a group of "sassy" working women who run a down-home catering business in the American South. If that description sounds rather generic, it fits the book perfectly. The imagination and talent that went into this novel would have trouble filling the titular jelly jar. Each character is a brightly coloured cardboard type balancing her idealized but disillusioned feminism with her carefully complicated yet ordinary life. I realize that description leaves room for some decent storytelling, but the structure of the writing is merely a string of cinematic clichés and no voice manages to sound believable.

We had gotten about two pages into the second chapter, and the point-of-view character had stopped the narrative for the sixth time to offer a pat but showy prayer. My mother closed the book and actually groaned. She looked at me. "Oh no," she said with a voice full of dread, "is this a *Christian* book?"

The jelly jar shatters

Let me assure you that neither my mother nor I have any issue with Christian writers – after all, I myself am a Christian writer. Nor do we disdain Christian books; our shelves are full of them. But what made the revelation of this particular book's faith-view so discouraging was how poor it was. After just one chapter, I myself was waiting for Dolly Parton to come and save me. It was similar to the feeling you get when a Bible-thumping racist pops up on the evening news, the feeling that those among us who are least qualified are leading the charge of Christianity in the eyes of the public, the shattering dread of a million stereotypes coming true before your eyes.

Why is it, exactly, that so much art made by Christians is so very, very bad?

Perhaps we have room for one more example. Near where I live, there is a large Christian "bookstore." (I use the quotes since half of its inventory is not reading material at all.) This store has two full rows crammed with Christian "romance" novels: books in which a dreamy, chaste girl-woman converts her bad-boy crush in time for a happy ending. What it doesn't have is much of anything written before 1995.

After half an hour of searching, I finally approached an employee for help. "Excuse me," I said, "but I can't find where your G. K. Chesterton is shelved."

"Who was that?" the polite woman answered, "Chester?" She typed the name (as I spelled it to her) into a computer and looked up. "We don't carry anything by that author," she told me, "Can I help you find anything else?"

"Charles Williams?" I ventured, not feeling particularly good about my chances. Another blank look, another careful typing, another polite "no." I finally ended up in front of the store's C. S. Lewis collection – all five books. I left feeling as if I had time-warped to some distant era where no one had any inkling of…well, the Inklings.

Buddy Jesus freaks?

And now you're all waiting for me to answer my previous question. Just why exactly do we find ourselves here? Why are there so many Jelly Jar Sisterhoods and so few Men Who Were Thursday? Where have all the Christian writers gone, and who are these blithely blind scribblers in their place?

I'm afraid I don't have the solution. My best guess is that as Christianity has become a subculture instead of a counter-culture, the standard of excellence that used to ride higher than that in "the world" has been replaced by a standard of safety. To quote Kierkegaard (I wonder if I could find *him* in the Christian bookstore?), "The day when Christianity and the world become friends, Christianity is done away with." Sadly, I think we now inhabit a world where Christianity is less interested in truth or excellence and more interested in making friends. Sometimes it feels like the church has been replaced by a kids' show called "Little Jesus' Hug House." The proof: that the most fitting picture of today's Christianity is *Dogma*'s Buddy Jesus from that grand blasphemer, filmmaker Kevin Smith.

At this rate, even Dolly Parton can't save us.

Brett Alan Dewing is co-editor of CC.

Christian Courier

Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to engage creatively in critical Christian journalism, connecting Christians with a network of culturally savvy partners in faith for the purpose of inspiring all to participate in God's renewing work within his fallen creation.

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Christian Courier
5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
Tel: (905) 682-8311; 1-800-969-4838
Web site: www.christiancourier.ca
Publications Mail Registration No. 09375
We acknowledge the assistance of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs. Canada

Aid without abortion:

Thus far in the Stephen Harper show . . .

Angela Reitsma Bick

Stephen Harper would make a terrible actor. He's not very dynamic, nor is he the kind of leader who inspires teenagers to study politics. Nonetheless, he's shown considerable talent for coordinating events on Parliament Hill. Harper's maternal initiative, for example, is more of a political move than a moral one. Perhaps he'd make a better director than star at Stratford. And although the lead role gets the standing ovation, it's the director who wields more power.

Like a child dictating freeze tag, Harper has prorogued Parliament to his own advantage twice. His every move is calculated to help the Conservatives. Last October, the Prime Minister made an unexpected appearance at the National Arts Centre gala, hopping up onstage to sing and play piano with renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Canadians were won over by the performance of a popular Beatles tune and the seeming spontaneity of the act. But in truth the orchestra had been briefed. They practised with Harper. His popularity had been slipping in the polls, and after that there was an uptick.

Act I

Since January, Harper's involvement in the maternal health proposal has also been part of a scripted performance. He started off rather pompously (but to general approval), saying that the G8 needs to focus on providing clean water, better nutrition and trained health care workers for moms and kids in developing countries. Since last year's Summit in Italy failed to conquer climate change, reducing maternal mortality sounded squeaky-clean. Like something everyone can agree on.

But Harper must have known otherwise. Maternal health means women's health, and there's no bloodier battleground than family planning (a euphemism for abortion) in North American today. So in proposing to send help to developing nations as part of the fifth Millennium Development Goal, Harper knew he was sending more than money; he was sending a message. And, initially, the G8 applauded.

Act II

The Liberals replied on cue, demanding that reproductive health has to include access to safe and legal abortions. While the largely liberal press ran headlines like "Harper poisons motherhood issue" (*The National Post*), one religious paper misquoted the opposition leader and set him up as the classic villain: "Ignatieff urges abortion for the world's poor" (*Catholic Register*).

Act III

In March, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made a cameo into Canadian politics during her visit, backing up the Liberals by defining abortion as an integral part of family planning. Harper seemed willing to lose the limelight during Clinton's visit but not to fall into step. Both Lawrence Cannon, Foreign Affairs Minister, and Minister of International Affairs Bev Oda affirmed more than once that "[Harper's] initiative does not include abortion." They were the Greek chorus in Harper's show.

Meanwhile, the most recent Gallup poll in the States found that 47 percent of Americans call themselves pro-life, with 45 percent self-identifying as pro-choice. It's the second year in a row that pro-lifers have been the majority, prompting Gallup to call it the "new normal." Yet the Obama administration just petitioned Congress for $715 million in 2011 for international reproductive health, which will include abortion.

This emphasis on abortion abroad is "a new twist on cultural imperialism," according to Rebecca Walberg of ProWomanProLife. It "impos[es] Western secular values on poorer parts of the world no matter how poorly they fit." At least Harper can read a crowd and is not insisting that Canadians export our own shameful treatment of unborn children.

Continued on page 5

Listen to the victims

I think that Mr. Aren Geisterfer's criticism (letter *CC* May 10) of my article in defence of Israel in the April 12 issue concerns the following main points.

1. Mr. Geisterfer thinks that I write in "the spirit of hatred against the Muslim Arab world." In fact, I stated that radical Islamists have vowed to destroy Israel. He seems to suggest that I just made that up. The reality is that the destruction of the Jewish people is openly called for in the Koran, the hadith and the purpose statements of radical Muslim organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, Fatah, and many more. That's why all peace negotiations have been fruitless. Yasser Arafat explained why he refused a peace agreement in 2000 in these revealing words: "We shall never commit a crime against them [future generations] – the crime of permitting the existence of a racial state in the heart of the Arab world." Efraim Karsh, author of *Islamic Imperialism*, has written that the Israel-Palestine conflict is not an ordinary territorial dispute but "a holy war by the worldwide Islamic *umma* to prevent the loss of part of the House of Islam to the infidels."

2. Geisterfer writes that we should be better acquainted with the Arab Muslims. I agree. But then he states that we Christians serve the same God as the Muslims do. I find that hard to believe in view of the history of Muslim-Christian relations and the Islamic scriptures, especially the Koran, which deny every one of the central Christian teachings, including the Trinity, Christ's death and resurrection, salvation by grace, and the authority of the Bible. The Koran describes Christians as blasphemers destined for hell. (Koran 5: 75) The God revealed in the Bible as the One who so loved the world that he sent his Son to save the world, not to condemn it, is the very opposite of the Allah of the Koran, who instructs his followers to subdue and even kill the infidels." (Koran 9:5; 9:29; 9:123)

3. Geisterfer says that I promote a view of Israel as the chosen people that is "abusive." I am not a Christian Zionist, but I defend the right of Israel to exist as a free and independent nation-state. The demonization of Israel via the UN (think Durban), in the Palestinian media, and in the schools where the minds of the very young are poisoned, is a shame and tragedy that is a serious barrier to the peaceful existence of Israel.

4. Israel is a flawed democracy, but it is a law-based state with an independent judiciary, which respects the freedom of religion. It includes some one million Arabs, who have their own representatives in the Knesset, and who are not compelled to serve in the Israeli army. Israel is in a precarious position. It is encircled by Muslim states that have vowed to destroy it, and several times tried to do so by military means. Israel has to protect itself against suicide bombers and rocket attacks, and it needs to be selective in granting citizenship rights to newcomers.

5. The Muslim Student Association (MSA) is a large presence on Canadian and American campuses. Writing about Whahhabism, professor Hamid Algar (U. of California) says that the MSA has consistently "advocated theological and political positions derived from radical Islamist organizations, including the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaati Islam." (Tarek Fatah, *Chasing a Mirage*, p. 313) They have often interfered with the freedom of speech of non-Muslim speakers. David Frum was right in exposing the bias against a pro-Israel student group at York University.

Conclusion. I agree that compassion and love must drive us. It seems to me that in the first place that should make us very attentive to the cries of fellow Christians (as well as all other non-Muslims) who are right now again going through the fires of persecution in a number of Muslim-ruled countries, including Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, and Sudan. In addition, we have the testimony of untold men and women who have lived in countries where Islamic law rules with an iron fist. It is especially women who bear the brunt of the abuse and helplessness imposed by brutal regimes. Are we listening to the cries of these victims, including those who suffer the unspeakable evil of the so-called honour killings that occur even within the free West, including Canada and the U.S.?

Harry Antonides
Willowdale, Ontario

Dear Anne, thanks for stopping by

Jenna Craine's article "Let Anne Coulter be obnoxious" (*CC* April 26) was well-written and even-handed. It is very true that Ms. Coulter has a right to air her opinions in speech, print and any other medium available to her. It is also true, however, that the students who protested Coulter's appearance had an equal right to be heard. Their point was an important one. They were stating their wish for a learning environment free from racial and religious prejudice. If Coulter has a right to be obnoxious, then others have a right to state their disagreement.

Many claimed that the protesters were trying to "muzzle" Coulter, but this is not necessarily the case. The protesters could not have known that the speech would be cancelled as a result of their actions. Coulter's speaking engagements are often accompanied by controversy, yet most of these events go forward.

Coulter argues that she had never been so ill treated, even by the "dumbest" schools in the U.S. Coulter's values are so thoroughly demented I have to accept this as praise for Canada and the University of Ottawa. Does anyone believe that Coulter is entitled to polite treatment when she suggests that Muslims are not fit to board aircraft and then adds that they can use flying carpets and camels as alternative means of transport? This is not political or social commentary; it is even lower than comedy. You cannot use slurs such as these and then ask that your audience treat you in a respectful way.

Coulter has won so much fame and wealth by being impolite that she has forgotten the simple truth that you get back what you give. If she is constantly cruel to her audience, she can hardly expect that she will be treated well in return. Furthermore, if Coulter can only offer ill considered one-liners that abuse an identifiable minority, no institution of higher learning is obligated to give her a forum for her views.

Harold Alkema
Ottawa, Ontario

Respect for otherness

This fine spring time evening on the edge of the rain forest without a cloud in the sky and the promise of renewal evident in nature all around was made perfect by reading the uplifting article, "Why are you here if you hate us?" (*CC* May 10)

Thank you, Dena Nicolai, for making such a heartfelt effort to open our eyes to the harm and hurts we unwittingly inflict on Muslim neighbours.

This, and Aren Geisterfer's call for compassion towards the Muslim, is a reminder of the gospel promise that good will overcome evil.

When we came to Richmond over a half century ago, there were fifteen thousand people, mostly Caucasians, and as many or more Frisian Holstein cows. Today, there are nearly two hundred thousand people with Caucasians being a visible minority. The old Christian Reformed congregation, like the Frisian cows, is gone, but in its place are two new CRC congregations, primarily Asian.

The world is much smaller than it used to be. George Grant taught that the essence of love is respect for otherness. Hope for this small world comes from respect for otherness.

Nick Loenen
Richmond, B.C.

Aid without abortion *continued*

Act IV

A few weeks after Clinton left, the opposition fulfilled its role: Foreign Affairs Critic Bob Rae stepped up, armed with an Opposition Motion certain to force the PM to his knees. But Rae stumbled. The motion that "demanded" inclusion of the full range of family planning didn't itself specify abortion, and was consequently defeated by a narrow margin. Thus at the upcoming G8 summit, Harper can legally say that he has the full support of Canadian parliament. He has organized his own countrymen just in time to step onto a world stage. The G8 summit will be the true test of his mettle. Has his most recent pro-life shift been principled or based on a pragmatic assessment of what voters want? Will he continue to play the pro-life role when facing tougher opponents than Bob Rae?

I think Harper deliberately kept abortion out of his maternal health initiative in order to win the support of the silent majority of Canadians. But hold your applause until the final scene. Act Five is coming up.

Angela Reitsma Bick is co-editor of CC. She lives in Barrie.

Christian Courier

Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association

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two yrs. (48 issues)	$90.00	

Advertising deadlines: display and classified advertising: Wednesday, 9 a.m. (12 days before publication date) See classified pages or web site **www.christiancourier** for more details. (ISSN 1192-3415) Published second and fourth Mondays of the month.

Address correspondence to: 5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838 Subscribe online at **www.christiancourier.ca**
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PRINTED IN CANADA

Religious exemption upheld by Court in Heintz v. Christian Horizons

ChristianHorizons

David A. van der Woerd

It has been said that a good judicial ruling can leave both parties dissatisfied. By that measure, the Divisional Court may have gotten this one right. On May 14, the Ontario Superior Court released its Reasons for Judgment in the Ontario Human Rights Commission (the "Tribunal") and Connie Heintz v. Christian Horizons. The case determined whether Christian Horizons could continue to claim an exemption to allow it to discriminate under section 24(1) of the Code.

In 1995, Christian Horizons hired Connie Heintz, a woman of "a deep Christian faith" trained in Christian counseling and ministry. Four years into her employment, she "came to an understanding of her sexual orientation" and entered into a same sex relationship, which did not comply with the Christian Horizons' Life Style and Morality Statement she had signed.

Discrimination complaint

After a warning for harassment and medical leave, Heintz resigned. Four months later, she filed her complaint with the Tribunal alleging that she had been discriminated against on the basis of her sexual orientation.

To win the ensuing court case, Christian Horizons had to prove that it was a religious organization; that it was primarily engaged in serving the interests of people identified by their creed and employed only people similarly identified; and that the restriction in employment to persons similarly identified by creed was a reasonable and *bona fide* qualification because of the nature of the employment (the "BFOQ requirement").

Tribunal's reasoning

The Tribunal conceded in its decision that Christian Horizons was a religious organization and thereby satisfied the first part of the test. But the Tribunal said that Christian Horizons missed the mark for the second and third parts of the test, because it serves the interests of all people with developmental disabilities, Christians and non-Christians alike. In addition, the Tribunal found that in adopting the qualification on employment imposed by the Life Style and Morality Statement, "no real effort was made to examine whether the requirement was in fact reasonably necessary or whether the employment could be performed without the discriminatory restrictions."

Christian Horizons appealed to the Divisional Court. Most religious organizations will be relieved that the Court came to the conclusion that the Tribunal had ignored the purpose of the exemption saying if the Tribunal's strict, plain language approach was correct, no religious institution would qualify for the exemption. The Court said that if the Tribunal's reasoning was allowed to stand, "(i)n effect, the religious character of the charitable mission would be rendered impossible...."

Nevertheless, the Court upheld the Tribunal's findings for the third test. The Divisional Court found that there was no evidence that anyone, including Christian Horizons, had ever considered whether the prohibition on same sex relationships was necessary for the effective performance of a support worker in a home. The court agreed with the Tribunal that Christian Horizons had not shown that the qualification that its support workers adhere to the Life Style and Morality Statement by not participating in same sex relationships was reasonable and *bona fide* because of the nature of that employment.

Partial victory

So the appeal was allowed in part. This was really a split decision. Going into court, Christian Horizons was hoping to reverse a defeat they had suffered at the hands of the Tribunal on parts two and three of the legal test. The Court reversed the Tribunal on the second part, probably the most worrisome for most Christian and other religious organizations, but not the third. Still, the order of the Tribunal was varied, including "to state that Christian Horizons shall cease to impose a requirement in the Lifestyle and Morality Statement that support workers not engage in same sex relationships."

As always, both sides claimed a victory. In reality, as far as establishing new law, little was accomplished. Christian Horizons and other religious organizations may still claim the exemption in s. 24(1) to justify otherwise certain discriminatory and prohibited activity under the Code. On the flipside, while the exemption lives, it is not unbridled and the BFOQ test must be taken seriously.

Recently, Paul Wells wrote in a *Macleans* magazine article that "*People who believe in God and vote their beliefs often work hard. That makes them a potent ingredient in any political coalition anywhere. They win some and lose some. Always have, always will. These days they win more than they used to. They still lose a lot.*" You may or may not agree with Mr. Wells' opining, but whether the litigants to this case admit to it or not, his comment could describe their sentiments after the Divisional Court ruling. As with any court case, there was no doubt a price had been paid by those directly involved. But beyond that, after the dust settles from a legal jurisprudential perspective, not much was really accomplished.

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Technically Speaking
Derek Schuurman

Refreshing our Reformed roots

I have a keen sense that I am blessed to be situated within a rich Reformed heritage which has sharp intellectual tools for engaging the wider world. The Neo-Calvinist worldview articulated by the likes of Kuyper, Bavinck, and Dooyeweerd is not only a world of ideas, but ideas with legs. These ideas have led to the formation of Christian labour unions, groups of Christian farmers, and Christian schools at all levels – including Redeemer University College.

Unfortunately, Reformed philosophy was not part of my engineering education. Recently I had the opportunity to learn more about the writings of Herman Dooyeweerd, a 20th-century Dutch Neo-Calvinist philosopher who was influential in shaping Reformed philosophy. I attended a week of sessions offered by the Paideia Center for Public Theology (www.paideiacentre.ca) which dove deep into Dooyeweerd's four-volume set titled *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. This course was led by Dr. Henk Geertsema from the Free University in Amsterdam, an expert in the area of Reformed philosophy.

Different languge

It didn't take me long to discover that these volumes are incredibly dense and extremely difficult to read. They almost require learning a new language of terminology – terms such as "transcendental ground motives," "enkaptic interlacing," "gegenstand," "arche," "supratemporal heart," "cosmic time," and "individuality structures." Apparently, computing isn't the only field that is full of jargon. These confusing terms can present a real a barrier and can isolate these ideas within a philosophical cul-de-sac. The ideas conveyed in these words need to be shared with the next generation of Christian professors and students. Perhaps what the world needs is a book along the lines of Dooyeweerd for Dummies.

Under the guidance of Dr. Geertsema and with the insights of some of the other workshop participants, the ideas of Dooyeweerd became more clear (although I must confess there were large sections that I did not fully understand). Dooyeweerd's philosophy has much to offer as we dig into a wide range of human activities and disciplines such as business, psychology, politics, art, law, and technology. Academic studies are like an ice cream cone: we often spend a lot of attention on the top, but as we dig down into the "cone" the issues become increasingly philosophical. We also acknowledged that, despite his brilliant insights, we weren't sure Dooyeweerd got it all right. However, I was able to catch a snapshot of a couple big ideas that I think are fundamental and applicable to the world of modern technology.

Worthwhile concepts

First is the notion that there is no such thing as religious neutrality; all the sciences have pre-theoretical presuppositions or a "religious root." These ideas, or ground motives, are like tectonic plates that lie beneath the surface of our work. We can view reality aright in the light of Scripture (what Calvin called our "spectacles"). We either find our norms in scripture based in Jesus Christ, or else some other apostate ground motive. This fact is evident in technology, where personal or corporate values and beliefs shape technical activities and shape the ways that technology is used.

Second is the notion of the broad and differentiated view of creation. Perhaps Dooyeweerd's most well-known contribution is his theory of the 15 modal aspects. These aspects identify a set of irreducible aspects of creation including the arithmetic aspect, physical aspect, biotic aspect, social aspect, aesthetic aspect, juridical aspect, and so on up to the pistic or faith aspect. Each of these aspects are governed by different laws and norms. This is an important concept in technology: to recognize that creation is diverse and complex and that one cannot explain all of creation in technical terms. It is also important to recognize that everything we do functions in all these modalities; indeed in computing we cannot ignore the moral, legal, and social aspects related to our technical activities.

I am grateful for the insights of those who have gone before us and for our Reformed philosophical roots. However, we need to continue this work in humility – recognizing our dependence on God, knowing that we still see as in a mirror dimly. In the words of Dooyeweerd himself: "God does not speak to theologians, philosophers, and scientists, but to sinners, lost in themselves and made into children through the operation of the Holy Spirit in their hearts." (quote from *In the Twilight of Western Thought* by Herman Dooyeweerd, 1960).

Dr. Derek Schuurman (dschuur@csredeemer.ca) is not a licensed or trained philosopher, but he is a computer science professor at Redeemer University College. He and his wife and four children live in Hamilton, Ontario.

Justice in the context of alleged church abuse:

Synod should reject the abuse victims task force recommendations.

John A. Tamming

Some years ago, an Ontario congregation did something unique in CRC history: it held a full trial concerning sexual abuse. An adult member of the CRC made certain allegations against an elder, which he disputed. A trial was convened, with the members of council sitting as jurors, and the elder lost. He appealed to Classis. Classis rejected the appeal. The elder appealed further, to the doorstep of Synod. The synodical judicial code committee rejected that appeal and the matter was over.

Unfortunately, the process available to the church at the time was and remains seriously deficient. As counsel to the congregation in question, I so informed the office of the CRC abuse prevention committee. The concerns were dismissed at the time. The "Abuse Victims Task Force" has now proposed further guidelines for Synod 2010.

These improved guidelines are, *where there are disputed cases of abuse*, materially defective. I hope delegates will do their duty, resist the temptation to let misguided notions of compassion guide them, consult with competent administrative law counsel, and politely but firmly send the report back for further improvement. It simply cannot be passed as is.

Where the guidelines work

The new guidelines work if the alleged offender admits what he or she did. Not only do they work – they have robust suggestions for restorative justice, for bringing a measure of shalom to a horribly broken situation. These recommendations can be adopted wholesale. They are a testament to the caring and loving body of Christ that we aspire to be and the committee is to be commended for this aspect of its work.

However, the guidelines fail miserably where there is no such admission, where the accused denies what happens. In such cases, the church is called upon to engage in a quasi-criminal investigative mode. Few things impact a life more than sexual abuse. Conversely, few things impact a life more than false allegations of sexual abuse. This makes the work of the church a brave task that requires competency of its players and fairness of its rules. These guidelines provide for neither. The rules are squarely slanted in favour of the accuser and against the accused.

Kangaroo court codified

The proposed process can be described briefly.

The alleged victim or accuser contacts a safe church team and is put in touch with an "advocate." I see nothing that prevents this advocate from being a lawyer. The advocate compiles witnesses, gathers testimony and advocates for the claimant before any and all church bodies. Does the accused get an advocate? No, he only gets a "support person." Quite a remarkable cleavage in language.

The first stop for the accuser is the safe church "advisory panel." I looked up the composition of this panel online. It turns out that this panel can have a lawyer or policeman on it but this is not required. The member must believe that abuse exists and needs to be dealt with "swiftly and justly – without cheap grace." The members need to have empathy and have "confrontation" and "anger management" skills. Apparently, you do not have to have any competence in the very thing that is critical in such hearings: the ability to ask probing questions and to assess credibility.

If consistory wants, two members of executive can observe the panel hearing. In that Ontario case, a young pastor from another congregation was the chair of the panel. With all respect to the seminary, they do not offer courses on the cross examination of witnesses and ministers have no business pretending to possess such competency.

Without the knowledge of the accused, the accuser meets with this panel with her advocate and tells them her story. The panel allows in-person testimony but it is not required. Affidavits are fine and so are phone calls, emails and apparently any other mode of communication that would make it more convenient for the complainant to tell her story. You could not write up a looser threshold for evidence if you tried. Anything and everything could get before the panel – including an email containing hearsay three times removed. This panel at this stage may also consult with "experts," which in this field usually means psychologists who provide opinions that may buttress the evidence of the claimant. The panel then decides whether the allegation is "both serious and probable." This is terrible grammar, but let's work with it a bit. The allegation itself cannot be "probable" – either there is or is not an allegation. I suspect what the committee really wants to say is that at this stage the panel decides whether the abuse probably happened. If the answer is yes, they inform the accused.

A losing battle

Stop here for a moment. What is wrong with this picture? Imagine you are a youth pastor accused of sexually abusing a young person seven years earlier in your previous charge. Assume that the claimant never approached you with the allegation. Under these proposals, the first you have heard of it is after the claimant and her advocate have lined up an entire case against you. The first you would hear of it is when you are confronted with a panel of three and a church executive fully apprised of the allegations, in possession of all witness statements, all medical and counseling notes and any and all psychologist and other expert reports. The first you have heard of it is when you are faced with a panel which has already decided that the claimant is probably telling the truth. Rather than facing a neutral adjudicator, you are up against a panel which, without hearing a peep from you, has voted you guilty.

The panel then invites you to meet with them, where the onus is on you to get the panel to reverse its admitted prejudice against you. Moreover, while the accuser has her advocate, you are expressly prohibited from having a lawyer present; you are limited to your ineffectual support person.

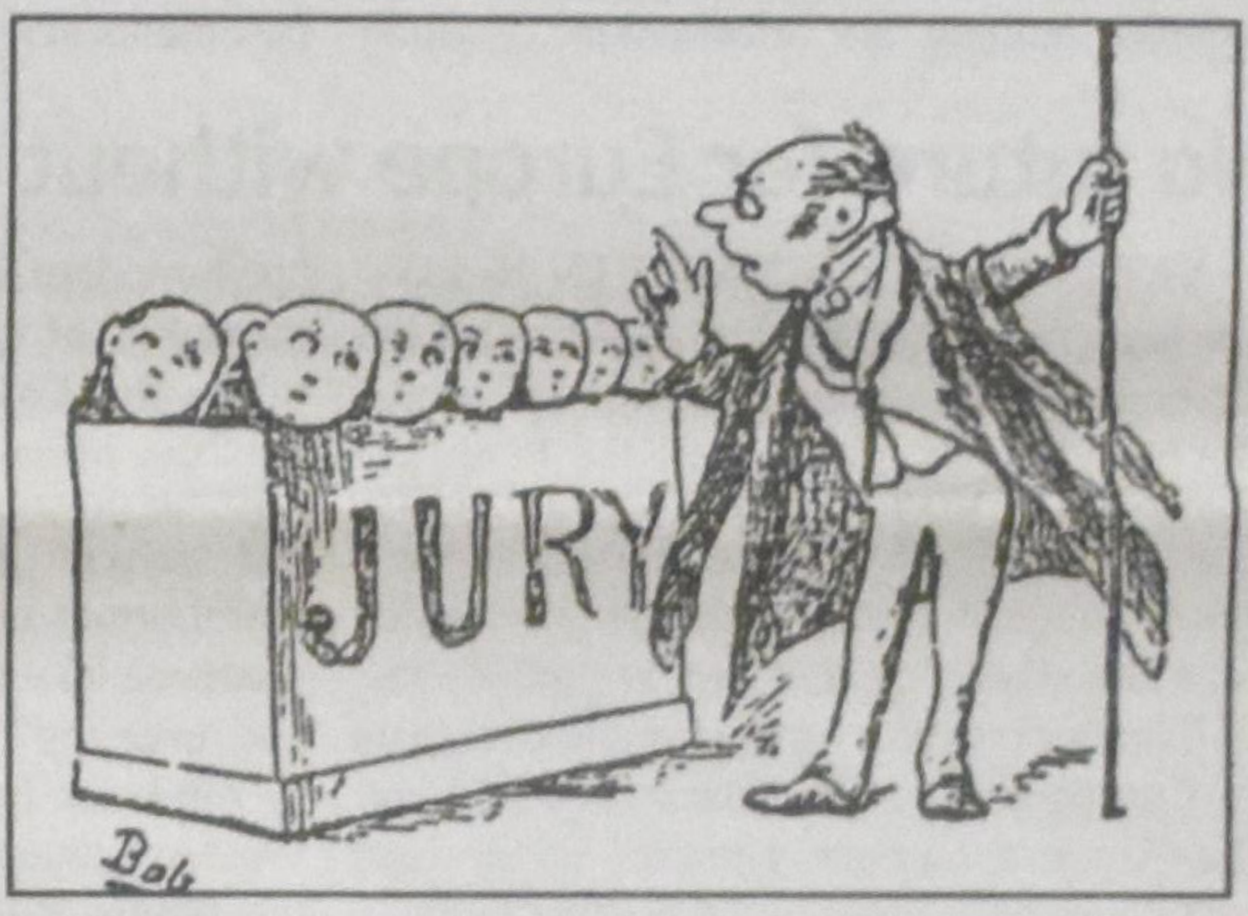
In the Ontario case, the chair of the panel would not return my calls since I was a lawyer (even though I was ostensibly neutral as a lawyer to the church). Further, the accused refused to participate in the panel on the advice of his (Christian and competent) lawyer because she was refused access to the hearing. To add insult to injury, the panel only need provide the accused five days notice of the hearing. The accuser has all the time in the world to build her case, the accused possibly as little as five days. Swift justice is one thing, trial by ambush quite another.

It gets worse. Assume that, after hearing your side of the story, the panel does not budge from its prejudice against you. The panel delivers its finding of guilt to church council. Church council must then either affirm the panel's findings or reject them. To help it decide what to do, council "may" conduct its own hearing – at which lawyers for both sides may be present at council's expense (the old guidelines stated that the council "has the responsibility to conduct a full hearing"). In other words, neither the accused nor the claimant are entitled to a full hearing with a neutral body as of right, nor are they entitled to legal counsel as of right. Council can approve a finding of guilt and discipline the church leader without the messiness of a full trial and on the basis of the finding of a panel as flawed as what we have just described.

Inadequate judicial code

If the trial is held by council, the guidelines are further crippled by the CRC judicial code. This most curious and thin of documents fails to provide for any rules of evidence and, perhaps most critically, fails to ascribe a judge's role to anyone in the process. A judge normally applies the rules of evidence, reviews that evidence for the jury, explains the law and clarifies any legal issues that arise. Without the equivalent of a judge, the jury is at sea.

If the matter is appealed from there, the flaws in these guidelines are again amplified by gaps in the judicial code of the CRC. For instance, there is no need that Classis have a transcript of the proceedings below (in our case, someone hollered from the floor of classis that anyone who wanted could listen to a tape of the proceedings as set up in the basement). Also, if the accused appeals he will appear at the classis level not against the accuser but against his own consistory; that is, his consistory argues that the decision it reached was a fair one. This is simply bizarre. No trial judge bounds up to an appeal court and defends his decision; it is left to the parties to argue it again.



Concluding comments

The CRC I grew up in prided itself on good order. These dispute resolution recommendations break with that tradition and clearly were drafted by members who are biased towards the needs of the alleged victim.

Every week, a police officer or a Crown Attorney examines an abuse file, telephones a witness or runs another interview of the accuser the day before trial "just to be sure." And every week some such professional decides that on certain files, the allegations cannot be proven, the witness is confused, the evidence too thin.

Many alleged victims are victims in fact and the church need rush to their aid. Others, however, have honestly held but wrong beliefs about what occurred 20 years ago or as a result of extensive recovery therapy or when they were seriously under the influence of one substance or another.

If the church is going to enter this field, if the church is going to offer itself as capable of adjudicating between competing stories, it simply has to come up with a more competent proposal than this.

If the proposals pass Synod as is, I would urge any accused person who denies the abuse to refuse cooperation with this flawed process. And if he or she is nonetheless found guilty or disciplined in his or her absence, the matter may well be referred to a civil court where a judge can review the process and offer his opinion as to whether justice was afforded by the church. Any such judgment would be scathing and the rules would be found to violate any one of a number of aspects of natural justice, including the right to counsel, the right to be promptly informed of a charge, the right to be heard by a neutral adjudicator and the right to a trial conducted by competent parties.

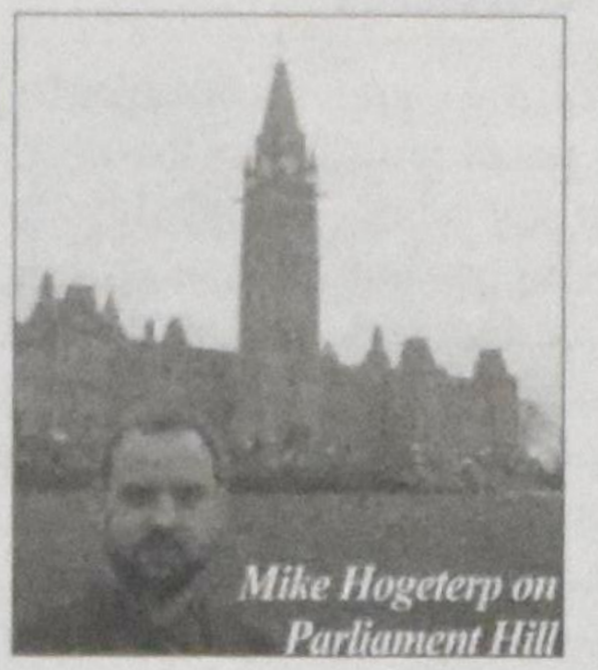
Church

CRC to open office in Ottawa

BURLINGTON, Ontario (CRCNA) – The Christian Reformed Church in North America's Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) will open a permanent office in Ottawa in early July.

CCG's move from the CRC Canadian headquarters in Burlington, Ontario, to a facility in downtown Ottawa just a short walk from Parliament Hill is another of the committee's various steps in "the call of seeking justice and speaking hope," says Mike Hogeterp, research and communications manager for the CCG.

Over the last several years the CCG has been in regular discussion with Members of Parliament and civil servants over a range of issues. With these relationships established, the move into the Ottawa office should enable CCG to build on these relationships and have CCG's ideas and agenda taken more seriously, Hogeterp asserts. The new office "means getting beyond the practice of having our ideas received politely 'for information….' Good relationships allow good dialogue," he says.



Mike Hogeterp on Parliament Hill

As a group with a national membership, CCG is well aware that Ottawa is not the centre of Canada's every sphere. "For this reason CCG will use its Ottawa presence to draw Christian Reformed and Reformed Church in America members to citizen engagement in social justice advocacy in new ways," says Hogeterp. "We'll plan regular conferences and 'Hill days' built around the advocacy themes of CCG and our partners. We'll also step beyond Ottawa and talk about the call to citizenship and reconciliation at church conferences, campus ministries and in church basements across the country."

Canada Day opening

The new office, at 140 Laurier Ave., will open on Canada Day, July 1. A formal opening celebration will occur in the fall of 2010. The physical office is connected to First Baptist Church in downtown Ottawa.

Over the last five years or so, says Hogeterp, CCG "has been more and more deliberate about building connections and relationships with policy makers and shapers. Through this we've found that constructive and respectful two-way dialogue with leaders opens doors for discussion on our faith-based perspectives on justice and peace – at the same time the dialogue helps to refine CCG's research."

CCG's presence in Ottawa will also benefit CRC members and congregations. "Our Mission," says a CRC statement, is to "seek God's justice and peace in every area of life." This includes citizenship and work for social justice.

"Being in the neighborhood helps MPs and the CCG (and by extension Christian Reformed people) see each other as human beings. This move will do a great deal to open up dialogue between church members, coworkers and government, with CCG there to make the introductions," says Grace Miedema, CCG co-chair.

As part of CCG's mandate to discuss and work toward justice, the CCG plans to host regular events and conferences on faith and justice. These will include connections with political leaders and "practicing the connections of justice and worship and citizenship and discipleship" out of the new office. "We're blessed with a facility that has the flexibility for events like this," says Hogeterp.

The move will also allow CCG to work with universities in the Ottawa area, including the Laurentian Leadership Centre of Trinity Western, to develop a consistent internship program. "We're excited at the prospects of working with a new generation of leaders for the call to faith, hope and justice," says Hogeterp.

No future for Europe without return to Christian roots: Catholic cardinal

VATICAN CITY (CNA/EWTN News) – During a recent symposium in Rome on the Orthodox and Catholic churches of Europe, the no-nonsense president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Walter Kasper, said that Europe's future hangs on evangelization resulting in a return to and renewal of its Christian roots.

The symposium "Orthodox and Catholics in Europe today: The Christian roots and the Common Cultural Heritage of the East and West" took place on May 20 at Rome's Russian Orthodox parish of St. Catherine of Alexandria. It was one of a number of events held during the "Days of Russian Culture and Spirituality in the Vatican" on May 19 and 20.

Evidence of "existential emptiness" can be seen in both the West and the East, he said. The West has been characterized by "post-modern indifferentism and the mentality of consumer escapism," while the East has been marked by "the blameworthy traces and spiritual devastation" resulting from the "atheist propaganda" of the Communist era, Cardinal Kasper observed. Noting the "new intensity and urgency" in the commitment to relations between Eastern and Western churches after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Kasper said that the subject also brings back to the surface the schism between Rome and Constantinople in the 11th century.

West meets East: Catholic Cardinal Walter Casper and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

'Re-evangelization' the only chance

Addressing these issues in the current situation, Kasper warned, "If Europe wants to have a future again, it must first and foremost renew its Christian roots." This renewal's only chance of success, he added, is through the re-evangelization of the continent.

The 77-year-old prelate noted that in their crises, the East and West face similar challenges, historically being civilizations "deeply defined by the Christian faith." He added that the European continent is marked by spiritual weakness and needs a renewal, beginning with the healing of divisions between Christians. "To find its spiritual and missionary strength again, Europe needs a new-found unity, first and foremost among Christians."

In that vein, a joint Italian-Russian Academy was inaugurated in Rome on the day Kasper spoke. The Academy will offer a permanent place for encounters between church and civil delegates and for the development of relations between the nations.

Haiti: CRWRC reaches $10 million milestone

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (CRCNA) – Donations to the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's Haiti earthquake fund topped $10 million (US) last month, making this project one of the largest relief efforts undertaken by the agency.

CRWRC is the relief and develop arm of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and receives widespread support from Canadian CRC members. The agency's International Disaster Relief team has been active in bringing aid to Haitians in the wake of the January 12 earthquake, working with other CRC agencies and partners.

Some of the money raised has been used to provide emergency food, tarps and supplies to earthquake survivors in the communities of Masson, Luitor, Flon, Macombe and Croix des Pere, near Leogane. The donations have also helped to install water systems, build latrines and distribute wheelbarrows and tools for clearing rubble in these communities.

Sous Espwa (Source of Hope) is the organization through which CRWRC's long-standing work in Haiti has been done. It also includes Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM), Back to God Ministries International and additional partners.

CRWRC began work in Haiti 30 years ago by instituting agricultural development programs in communities outside of the capital of Port-au-Prince.

Works well with others

Meanwhile, CRWM has had missionaries stationed in Haiti for many years and has supported formation of the CRC of Haiti. Although CRWM's work is mainly in training ministry leaders and growing churches, it was involved heavily in the relief effort in the first few weeks following the earthquake. Missionaries delivered food and found housing for earthquake survivors.

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) is active in broadcasting the radio programs of Rev. Paul Mpindi, director of Back to God's French language ministry. BTGMI's in-country employees and volunteers have also been involved in relief and aid efforts.

Rebuilding in Haiti, thanks to generous CRC donors.

ServiceLink, an office of the CRC, has helped to organize and co-ordinate the trips of volunteers to Haiti. Partners Worldwide, a ministry that works on business development using Christian principles, is also actively at work in Haiti.

Dutch shop gives away 'pope condoms'

AMSTERDAM (NOR) – A Dutch sex shop gave away 2,000 "Pope condoms" recently in a dig at the Roman Catholic Church.

De Condoomfabriek (The Condom Factory) said it wanted to "make a point" about sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies and the Vatican's opposition to contraceptives.

The condom wrapper carried the image of a papal figure with an unmistakable general likeness to Pope Benedict, though the figure's face is removed. It bears the words "I SAID NO! We say YES!" framing the papal image.

The suggestion of a "pope condom" caused a diplomatic row last month when Britain's Foreign Office was forced to apologize for a memorandum by a civil servant that suggested Benedict launch a papal-brand condom on his pending visit to the UK.

Education

Hope College upholds gay policy amid protest

HOLLAND, Mich. (TCP) – A Reformed Christian college in Holland, Michigan, rejected petitions by gay rights advocates and alumni to drop its policy on homosexuality last month.

After months of protest and criticism sparked by a decision not to screen on campus the film *Milk* (about the late Harvey Milk, the first openly gay politician in California), Hope College's board of trustees reaffirmed its position that homosexual practice is contrary to Scripture. Hope College is associated with the Reformed Church in America (RCA), the denomination out of which the Christian Reformed Church was formed in 1857.

"The college's current position on homosexuality is based on its interpretation of Scripture. It is recognized that well-intentioned Christians may disagree on scriptural interpretation. Still, humbly and respectfully, the college aligns itself in its interpretation with its founding denomination, the Reformed Church in America, the orthodox Christian church throughout the ages, and other Christian colleges and universities," the board said in a statement.

A petition was started earlier this year in an effort to push for the removal of the college's policy on homosexuality, written in 1995. The policy also states that the college does not approve gay advocacy but encourages love and sensitivity in the care of all people.

Ongoing controversy

Endorsed by some alumni, students and faculty, the petition was passed around after the school had barred a campus screening of the 2008 film *Milk*. The film's screenwriter, Dustin Lance Black, showed the movie and hosted panels in two non-college theaters near the campus. The events were sold out with mainly students and faculty from Hope College.

Opponents of Hope College's policy have argued that the school has not opened dialogue on the issue of homosexuality. The issue, however, has been discussed on campus for over a decade, particularly in 1999 when gay rights groups visited the campus and when the four-year liberal arts college denied the bid of the Gay Straight Alliance to be recognized as a formal campus student organization during the 2000-01 academic year.

Hope College opened in 1851. Its mission is to "educate students for lives of leadership and service in the context of the historic Christian faith." It currently has 3,230 students.

Trinity Western soccer women 'invade' South America

Marian Van Til, *with files from TWU*

LANGLEY, B.C. – The Trinity Western University women's soccer team, the Spartans, landed in Paraguay and Argentina last month. The friendly invasion was motivated by two desires: to do mission work and to play soccer in two soccer-mad countries.

The team played in competitive games in both countries, including in a game against the Paraguayan U21 National side. The women also had the chance to be spectators at one of the biggest local soccer games of the year, the El Classico, in Paraguay's 40,000-seat national stadium. But the players' focus was primarily on serving in soup kitchens and orphanages, running soccer clinics and being a Christian witness in these developing nations.

The team arrived in South America with 25 athletes, three coaches and an outreach pastor from California. Team members were intent on building relationships in many local communities, and in furthering previous work begun by the group "Athletes in Action" a few years ago. (The women temporarily traded their traditional TWU blue uniforms for the red used by Athletes in Action.)

'Better than any trophy'

Using the phrase, "Better than any Trophy," coach Graham Roxburgh led the team in organizing soccer clinics, a five-on-five tournament and a tournament that involved more than 300 underprivileged children. The team was also involved in training some 80 pastors and volunteers in how (and why) to run soccer clinics in their communities.

The trip allowed the opportunity for players to develop deeper bonds with each other as well as to share their stories of faith with local residents. They also discovered how soccer can be used to spread the Word of God.

For Coach Roxburgh and his team, the South American missions' trip was a valuable adventure that wasn't so much about winning games as about the relationships developed and the messages both learned and conveyed.

Trinity Western University in Langley, B.C., is a provincially chartered, independent Christian liberal arts and sciences university. It currently has approximately 4,000 students.

Christian schools may exclude those who undermine religious values: family council

WASHINTON, D.C. (CNA) – After a Catholic elementary school was recently admonished by the Boston archdiocese for canceling the admission of an eight-year-old student whose adoptive parents are a lesbian couple, a debate has ensued over the proper response of Christian schools to the admittance of children with same-sex couple parents.

When St. Paul Catholic School in Hingham, Massachusetts, outside Boston, withdrew admission for the upcoming year to the eight-year-old whose parents are lesbians, principal Cynthia Duggen and parish priest Fr. James Rafferty reached that conclusion based on their Christian principles, they said. They told one of the women during a conference call that the boy could not attend as the parents' relationship "was in discord with the teachings of the Catholic Church" which state that "marriage can only take place between one man and one woman."

The superintendent of the area's Catholic schools, Dr. Mary Grassa O'Neill, did not support their decision.

But Peter Sprigg, Senior Fellow for Policy Studies at the U.S. Family Research Council, argues that Christian schools have "every right to exclude from the school community those who seek to undermine their religious values."

School relates to children *and* parents

The Family Research Council (FRC), founded in 1983, describes itself "as an organization dedicated to the promotion of marriage and family and the sanctity of human life in [American] national policy…. Believing that God is the author of life, liberty, and the family, FRC promotes the Judeo-Christian worldview as the basis for a just, free, and stable society."

Sprigg says that "is well established that the freedom of association includes the freedom of private organizations not to associate with those who do not share the goals of the organization."

He added, "This is especially true for religious organizations which have every right to exclude people whose beliefs or lifestyle contradict the moral and theological teachings of that organization."

"Many Christian schools do not consider themselves to be in a relationship with the student alone, but with the student's parents as well, and they have every right to exclude from the school community those who seek to undermine their religious values."

Italy deports Islamic students accused of plotting against Pope

ROME (Catholic Culture) – Italian authorities expelled two Moroccan students in late April, saying that they were threats to national security. Mohammed Hlal and Errahmouni Ahmed, students at the University of Perguia, were deported after an investigation into Islamic radical groups. According to *Panorama* magazine, the interior ministry argued that the pair were plotting an attempt on the life of Pope Benedict XVI.

"Hlal wanted to kill the Vatican's head of state [the Pope], saying he was ready to assassinate him and gain his place in paradise," Italy's interior minister Roberto Maroni wrote in the expulsion order authorizing Hlal and Ahmed's deportations.

Anti-terror police in Perugia intercepted Hlal discussing his plans to carry out attacks and readiness to obtain explosives for the attacks during a series of tapped telephone conversations, according to *Panorama*. The interior ministry said the two students had links to an international network of Islamist militants and were prepared to carry out "extremist acts."

Hlal and Ahmed's deportation followed a probe begun by anti-terrorism police in October 2009 into a group of radical Muslim foreign students in Italy, most of whom came from the Moroccan city of Fez. Several were studying at Perugia. The interior ministry said Hlal and Ahmed belonged to this group.

The students, who are now free in Morocco, have denied the charges and announced plans to contest their expulsion. Their defense is being paid for by a local human rights association.

Christian media: fractured voice in a commercial world

Emily Wierenga

"The church now has the opportunity to be as creative in the media as it has been for 2,000 years in its architecture, stained glass windows and theological thought," says Presbyterian minister Larry Brice, host of Crossroads Television Station's Reachout for Life.

Sadly, he adds, it isn't.

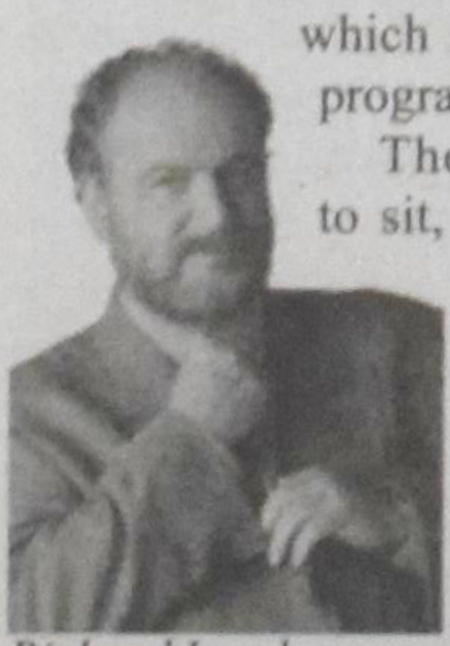
Recently I had the opportunity to appear on *100 Huntley Street*, a flagship television program of CTS. I was welcomed into the studio with open arms and felt free to tell of my struggle with Anorexia Nervosa in front of thousands of viewers. I was humbled by the sincerity of the hosts and the integrity of the show.

Yet as I pulled on my coat and walked away from the bright lights, I couldn't help feeling as if everything was an act, a façade hiding my frail faith and the shadows of the past still haunting me today.

I decided to visit Crossroads Television Station (CTS) to find out what life beyond the camera is like. As CTS is seemingly a positive alternative to other cable stations, I wanted to know the truth. With reruns of *Laverne and Shirley* and *Full House* filling in space between *Faith Journal* and *The Michael Coren Show*, was it saying family values and faith were one and the same? I knew it inspired lives, but was it also hurting people's faith by cheapening the concept of Christianity?

The public face

Located just north of Toronto, the Crossroads Centre is an expansive brick building with stained-glass windows juxtaposed with a shiny new pink expansion. Upon entering, one is greeted by a lobby full of skylights and mirrors. There is a strangely relaxed atmosphere for a place which shoots eight hours of programming a day.



Richard Landau

The secretary asks me to sit, motioning towards a wide-open reception area under a glass ceiling. I wait for my interviewee, Richard Landau, to arrive. When he does his smile stretches, then his head bobs; he's in a hurry. We rush to his office past multiple swivel chairs in pastel coloured offices and dozens of people speaking into phones and sipping coffee. I slip into a chair across from Landau, who's in charge of CTS's multi-faith programming, and begin to query him as he types emails and answers calls.

I soon find out he's not a Christian; he exists to make CTS acceptable to all faith-viewers. I begin to wonder what is "Christian" about a station which promotes all faiths; Landau then explains to me it's not a Christian station. By having secular status they can reach more viewers, but this also means abiding by secular expectations such as family-friendly shows and multi-faith programming. Their website explains it like this: "Whether it's a father and son discussion on *7th Heaven* or a tender moment between a single father juggling a job and his three young daughters on *Full House*, CTS has entertaining programming that presents values and beliefs many of us share." The more values it represents, the more viewers the station attracts. In short, CTS is a business, not a ministry.

A historian once said, "Christianity began as a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When it went to Athens, it became a philosophy. When it went to Rome, it became an organization. When it went to Europe, it became a culture. When it came to America, it became a business."

When asked about the critical voice represented at CTS, Landau sits back for a minute and says, "You know, we're not left-wing or right; we just deal with subjects straight-on." He cites an example of a recent forum in which they were discussing the role of the hijab in the Muslim world. Some said it was demeaning to women. Landau proposed that if they didn't think Muslim woman should wear head coverings, neither should Catholic nuns. "Consistency," he said. "That's what it's all about. That's what our viewers want to see and hear."

CTS is about show, he adds, not tell. "The difference between American and Canadian Christian media is Canadians are gentler. They try and show Christianity with their lives. At CTS, that's what we aim to do. We talk about big issues and life questions; we don't preach."

Reflecting Canada's multicultural society, Landau said viewers will find CTS very different from the American model where, for instance, evangelists sell anointing oil and prayer cloths.

This seemed a good time to bring up Benny Hinn, the station's controversial televangelist who spends half his show advertising the latest gold-plated item which will be sent to donors who keep his ministry "afloat." Landau shakes his head and says, "I don't like Benny. But many viewers do, and he brings in good revenue, so he stays." I shake my head, confused by the apparent contradiction; ultimately, it's all about the bottom line.

"Christianity began as a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When it went to Athens, it became a philosophy. When it went to Rome, it became an organization. When it went to Europe, it became a culture. When it came to America, it became a business."

The rebel yells

CTS has divided its shows into three categories: Family – shows like *Facts of Life*; Original – programming which reaches all faith groups; and Ministry – which is where *100 Huntley Street* comes in. In spite of being filmed in the same building as CTS, *100 Huntley Street* is in fact produced by Crossroads Christian communications, Inc. While CTS relies on advertisers for business, *Huntley* is dependent on donors.

"*100 Huntley* is afraid of offending their donor base, which is soon going to be dead," says radio talk show host Drew Marshall.

Marshall, who calls himself the "voice of messy spirituality" also appeared on *100 Huntley* – only to have his interview deleted from Crossroads' website. "I was straight-shooting, and they panicked," Marshall states. He was quoted as telling the hosts, Ronald and Ann Mainse, "You guys are the Ken and Barbie of Christian television... the sign of a good church is how many ugly people there are." He also stated that he likes to "find those with holy hand-grenades up their butts and pull the pin" and expressed his displeasure with "Cheesy Jesus TV, where straight guys design the sets."

While maintaining a friendship with the hosts, Marshall will never be asked back to the show. He acknowledges that the show is reaching people, but he cannot relate to that audience.

Instead Marshall seeks to "rub shoulders with sinners who don't understand why Jesus hasn't given up on them yet." As *The Drew Marshall Show*'s slogan states, they're "Living messy lives with God in the middle of it."

"What are we afraid of?" Marshall asks. However, he can afford to say that, having a once-a-week show funded by advertisers. *100 Huntley* cannot; its support, as Marshall said, comes largely from the donations of elderly viewers who are easily shocked and offended.

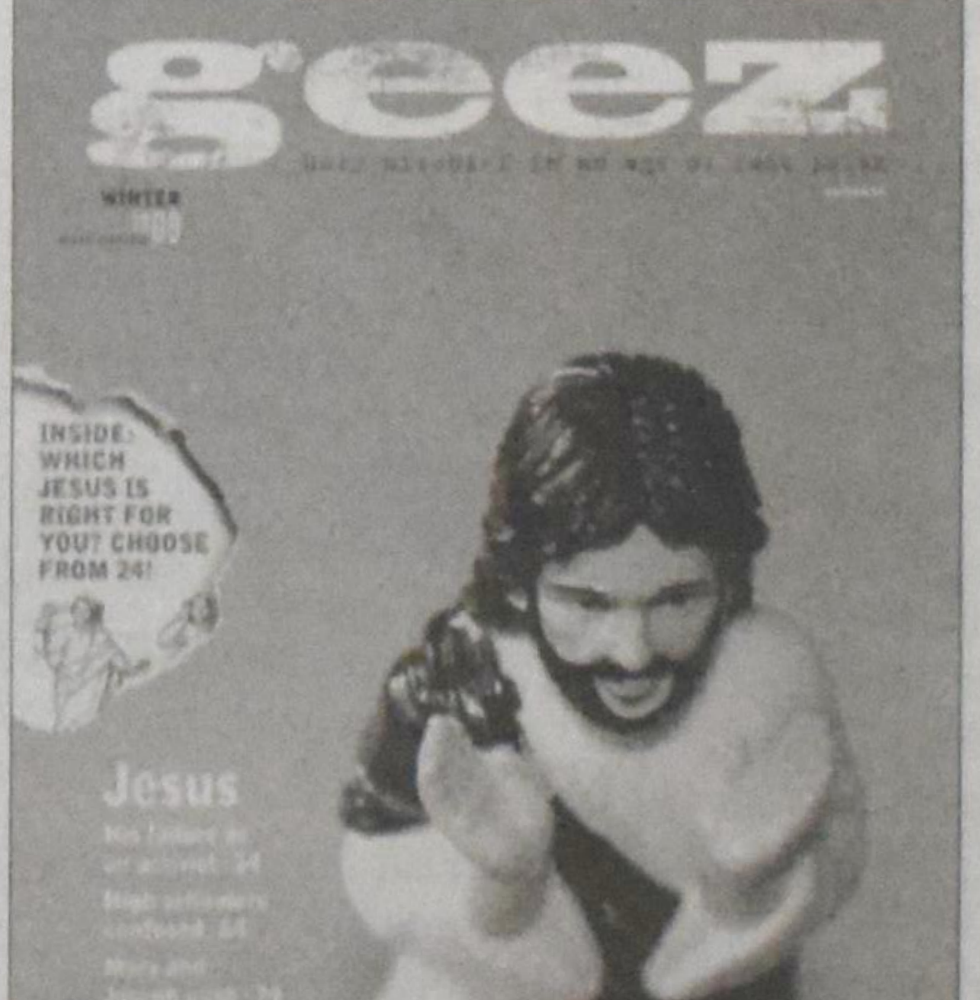
"Does the corny, cheesy, over-the-top style of much of Christian media (especially television) drive away as many people as it draws?" asks Dr. Phil Cooke, author of *Branding Faith*, *Creative Christian Media* and *Successful Christian Television*.

Marshall believes it does. "We've become obsessed with making the message safe and palatable. I think as much as we might get angry at others distorting the truth, when we take the truth and continue to sterilize it, that's just as bad."

Geez magazine, an anti-advertising non-profit magazine, also relies on donations but is funded by an audience of young cynics who are tired of so-called "Christian" media and its tattered soap box.

Founded by *Adbusters*' former managing editor Aiden Enns, this fringe-media outlet has the tagline, "Holy mischief in an age of fast faith." Enns says he's trying to counteract new Christian media which is pretending to be "hip," when "all it's doing is pandering to consumerism and the status quo."

While efforts like *100 Huntley Street* are changing lives, "So much ugly stuff happens in the name of religion," says Enns. "So we thought we'd almost blaspheme the name of Jesus to get the attention of comfortable church folks and express the frustration of others who've left the church in a huff."



"We're unique in that we're not strongly pro-Christian per se," says Associate Editor Will Braun. "We try to take a step back and simply look at religion as a phenomenon in society."

What they've found is that religion has been stereotyped by soft answers when all people want is the freedom to ask life's hard questions.

Geez is determined to provide a safe place where such questions can be asked. Its 100 percent post-consumer recycled pages are covered in rants like the one by "evangelical hothead" Todd Friel, as well as jabs at "overzealous activists" like *Sojourners*' Jim Wallis for "being so caught up in the machinations of power politics."

Faith in the media

With coverage by major secular media like CBC and *Macleans* magazine, *Geez* is quickly becoming an accepted form of "Christian" expression among non-believers. Yet this could also be the fact that, like CTS, it too embraces atheistic or unchurched voices, once again forcing me to ask, "Is it really Christian media?" While calling itself such, the magazine abuses and uses the title in order to attract more readers.

The rich seed

Newspapers want readers. Television stations want viewers. How do Christians survive in a competitive industry geared at various audiences without selling out? Without becoming so soft the message rots in people's mouths?

"We need to engage our faith in a way that's effective," says Dr. Karen Hamilton of the Canadian Church Council. "We're called to be peacemakers, but how can we make peace if we don't know what the issues are?"

Developed in 1995, the CCC acts as a forum for people of faith to discuss important issues like biotechnology, justice and peace. "At the council, our goal is to get the questions out there," says Hamilton. Such questions include "Should Christians grow genetically modified foods?" and "What should the church's response be towards Afghanistan or Iraq?"

"If all (faith-based) media addressed some of these questions, we would attract non-Christians. We cannot be afraid to critique ourselves. Jesus said to follow him: the reality of the Gospel cannot be changed by what we say. God cannot be undermined."

Documentary director Karen Pinker, who describes herself as a "reverent agnostic," believes strongly in the potential of faith-based media. "Many of the most exciting, relevant and important issues which face our society are related to religion," she says. "Mainstream media in Canada is ill-equipped to understand and interpret the impact of religion in our lives. It tends to fall back on political correctness, stereotypes and plain misinformation."

It would seem however, says Marshall, that Christian media falls back on the same assets.

"What's happened is we've sterilized Christendom so badly that what we've done is inadvertently brainwashed followers of Christ to think that if I don't have total victory and can't use victory language all the time I'll never be put up on that platform. It offers hope to some, but for the majority they think there's something wrong with them and their theology."

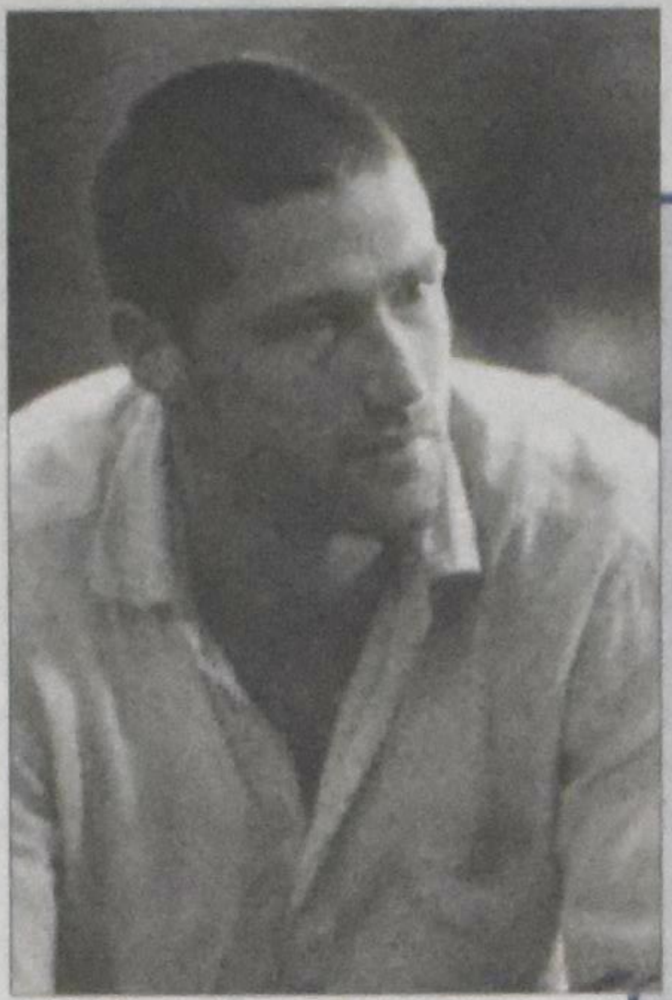
Hamilton relates the fractured voice of Christian media to church denominations; each denomination wants its own version of the truth. Yet at what point does altered truth become a lie?

Nevertheless, in spite of its flaws, Christian media is still having a positive impact, as proven by Jeff Caporale, founder of *Living Light News* in Edmonton, AB.

Caporale was like a lot of people: insecure, anxious, and fearful.

"As I earned more money and bought more things, I found them unfulfilling and got to a point of extreme emptiness."

By the age of 35, Caporale had enough savings to retire. Yet the empty hours proved too much for the former workaholic; he began watching *100 Huntley Street* just to fill time.


Matthew Fox as Lost's *Jack Shephard*

"I saw Christ in those people. I saw the fruit of the Spirit – love, peace, joy, humility, a lot of hope and faith. I didn't really have any of those qualities, so I kept watching. I was really hungry to know the God they were talking about."

In 1993 Caporale says "I got down on my knees and cried out to God and asked for forgiveness. I asked him to please come into my life." Over the following year he used his savings to initiate Living Light News, an evangelistic newspaper which today has a circulation of more than 75,000 across Canada.

"I felt God had reached me through the media and he wanted me to use media to reach others. I couldn't understand why the experience I had and the realization that Jesus was alive wasn't more out there. I thought it should be in all the papers, mainstream and Christian."

In 1995 *Living Light Ministries* was formed as a non-profit, inter-denominational organization. It has since gone on to win numerous awards, including being named North America's Most Outstanding Newspaper by the Evangelical Press Association. "When I started the paper, I wanted it to be really good," says Caporale. "Especially if it was God's paper – it should glorify him. I don't think anything Christian should be second-rate."`

Caporale has gone without a paycheque since the newspaper's inception. One day he hopes this will change, but for him, it's more important to see Christ glorified than his wallet.

Cooke urges all Christian communicators to put faith before the dollar; only then will the fragmented voice of Christianity be unified in a world of commerce.

"For some, like an addiction, it overtakes their personality," he says of media production. "For others, it's a wonderful release of innate gifts and talents. For some, it will turn them into a con-artist, on a relentless pursuit of money to keep the venture going. For many, it's about greed. But fortunately, for others, used with insight and discernment, it's a positive tool to change the world."

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On May 24, the final episode of TV's* Lost *aired, bringing an end to a massively successful, boldly spiritual pop culture phenomenon. The show explored philosophical and religious themes through the story of plane crash survivors (with names such as Locke, Hume, and even C. S. Lewis) marooned on a mysterious island. Below, one man reflects on the experience of following this story for six years.

Lost: Guys…where are we?

Ron VandenBurg

Mysteries. What is the smoke creature that protected the island: an angel or a demon? Can lead character Jack really change and find redemption? "Guys…where are we?!" was an early question asked in the first episode.

As a fan since episode one, I had a number of "*Lost*'s Must-Answer Mysteries" going into the finale. Some friends of mine caught on the *Lost* journey by enjoying the DVD collections, so it's never too late to join the story. As much as I would have loved to have had all the mysteries answered, I believe that it is the themes of *Lost* that will make viewing enjoyable for anyone willing to take the first step.

Themes

Let's start with "what is the island?" People perceive the island as either good or bad. John Locke, a character representing the concept of faith, sees the island as special. He was healed, because he was on the island. He came face to face with the island monster and was not harmed. He even saw the monster as beautiful. I wonder if Locke was less a man of faith and more a man who wished he had faith. He believed in the power of faith and yearned to believe in something. In the end, he decided to believe in the wrong thing.

A second theme is trust. Can the island be trusted? What and who do the characters trust on the island – their friends, their family, science, their own knowledge, their physical strength? Can we trust one thing only? Can we trust religion and science? Are we fools? Is it "one big con" as Sawyer would say? In the final episode and throughout season six, all the castaways needed to trust each other, as it became clear that they needed each other to stay alive.

Calvinists should love the third theme of free will vs. determinism. Did these people crash on the island for a reason? What is their destiny, or is it all chance? In our post 9/11 world, we often ask "why has this happened" a lot. Throughout the series run, Jack Shephard, the main character, struggled with what he began to see as his destiny to take care of the island. As a man of science, he rejected the notion, but as he was torn down throughout the series, he changed from a doubting Thomas to the defender of the island.

Faith and redemption

People talk about the *Lost* debate focusing on Reason vs. Faith. Do all the mysteries of the island have a rational scientific explanation, or is there a supernatural solution? Are we looking at connections with ancient myth and biblical truths? Throughout the series and the finale, Christian images were woven throughout, from Christ figures like "Christian Shephard," communion rituals or the island as the Garden of Eden. A character with the name of John Locke points to the Age of Enlightenment debate of naturalism/spirituality.

But the heart of *Lost* is the heart of all literature, the theme of redemption. The castaways come to the island carrying sins of the past. Events happen on the island that allow each person a chance to change and make amends. First, they have to take a good hard look at themselves and repent for those sins. So is the island heaven, hell or purgatory?

In the end, it would have been more appropriate for the writers to give the show a clear worldview that gave direct answers to the show's spiritual questions and mysteries. Instead, viewers got spiritually neutral perspectives that all we need is love, and we're all in this together and finally that together we can all work it out.

So bye-bye passengers of Oceanic 815! Go into the white light to…some place or other…or not. And Jack, we hope that you ended up in a good place. We viewers loved the mysteries and cared about the characters, but in the end we had hoped for something more.

Family

From Toddlers to Teens
by Denise Dykstra

Empathy needs to be taught

"Turn the other cheek," Jesus instructed in the New Testament, but for some kids "an eye for an eye" seems to come more naturally. I heard it again this morning. "If you're not going to play basketball with me, I'm not going to play *anything* with you *all day*," declared my four-year-old son to his seven-year-old sister. Her response: "Then I won't play with you *all week*!"

When kids feel hurt, their initial response is often to hurt back. That "get mad, get even" attitude is not unusual. But it is wrong. The Bible commands us to focus on God and our neighbours before we concentrate on ourselves. It's up to us, as parents, to teach our kids how to put others first.

It's never too early to begin cultivating servantlike traits. From the time our children are born we can model basic kindness. Once they hit toddlerhood we can help them recognize that other people have feelings, too. As they approach school age we can introduce them to empathy and compassion. Questions like, "What do you think that boy is feeling? What could we do to make him happier?" will point them in a godly direction.

At home we can encourage our kids to look out for the good of their siblings. This is an area in which many children struggle. Jealousy or competition between brothers and sisters often flares into squabbles and bickering. Instructing our kids in the art of compromise and negotiation can help them learn to value one another's perspective.

Opportunities for service grow

By the time our kids are teens, they're bombarded with the teachings of society, which directly contradict the teachings of the Bible. Everywhere they go they're overwhelmed with advertisements telling them to be selfish. Go ahead and buy it, commercials scream, because you deserve it … you are worth it … you're entitled to it. This is a time we really should be encouraging our kids to put others first. Thankfully, it's also an age at which servanthood can be practiced in a concrete way. Teenagers are more than capable of mowing a sick neighbour's lawn. They can drive a widow to a doctor's appointment or volunteer at a food bank. They can even journey to developing countries to build homes or work in an orphanage.

Our oldest son, Sean, is in Grade 10 at Edmonton Christian High School. This is our family's first foray into senior high, and we're very pleased with the emphasis the school places on servanthood. In keeping with its mission – to educate students for joyful and responsible service to God and society – ECS requires all students to complete 75 hours of service each year. So far, Sean's mentored a nine-year-old boy with the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, wrapped cutlery for a downtown homeless mission, helped out in a number of Sunday School classes, and prepared meals for a church fundraiser. He hasn't always wanted to do these things, but he's never once regretted them. He's beginning to realize that in giving there is much he receives.

Its own rewards

God richly rewards servant behavior. Most people experience feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction after helping someone else. They feel needed, appreciated and valued. And that's just the beginning. Servanthood builds self-esteem and confidence. It teaches leadership skills and improves communication skills. Some even say kids who are given opportunities to serve others also tend to make healthier lifestyle choices and develop better social skills than those who don't volunteer.

Of course, putting others first doesn't always mean doing things for them. Sometimes it involves considering their needs before you insist on your own. And sometimes it's as simple as listening instead of talking. The important thing is to have a servant mind, to allow God to work in our lives and through our lives. That's what we, as parents, ought to strive to teach our kids. It definitely won't be easy – whether they're toddlers or teens – but it's what our Heavenly Father commands.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (Philippians 2:3-4)

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Intangible Things
Heidi VanderSlikke

The big bang

Very close to the Middle-of-Nowhere lies a country intersection known as Alsfeldt. Beautiful and peaceful, it consists of a rustic United Church, a couple of houses, a sheep farm, a beef farm and my son and daughter-in-law's chicken farm. What it lacks in population, it makes up for in community spirit.

James and Willene moved there nearly four years ago and immediately launched major improvements to the house, barns and property. Before long it hardly looked like the same place. One imposing feature remained, however. A completely useless 90-foot-high silo towered between the bank barn and the poultry barn.

In the 1970s the bank barn housed cattle. The farm's owner at the time erected the oversized silo. Apparently it was filled twice in its nearly 40 years of existence. From then on it loomed as a monument to agricultural mismanagement.

I assumed it would cost a fortune to remove and began to think of it as Alsfeldt's version of the CN Tower.

Great precision

James, on the other hand, was determined to bring it down. He heard of a demolition expert named Austin who would blow up the silo for a reasonable fee.

He admitted it would be tricky, but Austin assured James and Willene that he could safely drop the silo without collateral damage. He visited the farm a few times to calculate exactly in which direction he would fell the giant. Just before the scheduled event, he decided to lay it down in the limited space between the shop and the bank barn.

At last the big day arrived. Truckloads of sand were strategically piled according to Austin's instructions. Stacks of straw bales protected the shop, propane tanks and house. After several hours Austin set the first charge. He cleared the area around the silo, then retreated to the detonator on the lawn.

"Fire in the hole!" he shouted.

Smoke and sand spewed from the base of the silo, accompanied by a loud bang.

With tedious precision he repeated the procedure several times over the course of the afternoon, eventually creating a large cavity on one side of the bottom of the tower, much like a lumberjack notching a tree.

A small crowd of onlookers assembled on James and Willene's yard. Watching the entire process gave me plenty of time to think. I realized I had actually learned to ignore the silo. How is it possible to regularly pass by something the size of Nebuchadnezzar's idol and no longer see it? I saw a spiritual lesson in that.

Ignoring the need for change

My inclination when dealing with things too big and too solid for me to handle is to turn a blind eye. It's true of the sin in my life, for instance. What can I do about such a massive and all-encompassing issue? Nothing, really. So, too often I simply accept things the way they are, forgetting that there is One who can effectively make the necessary changes in my life.

Right before sunset Austin placed the last sticks of dynamite. He called James over to relocate some sand. When the shoveling was complete, he walked around the site once more, double-checking the details. All the charges had to go off simultaneously this time. Otherwise the silo would topple in the wrong direction.

The crowd grew silent as Austin sauntered toward the detonator. James paced nervously. I made sure my camera was recording, and then prayed silently.

Austin picked up the detonator. "Fire in the hole!"

Boom! The silo seemed to drop to its knees, hanging precariously for a second, and then 400 tonnes of concrete and rebar slammed to the ground, exactly where it was supposed to land. A cloud of dust rose up. People clapped and cheered.

In less than a minute the dust settled and the crowd descended on the wreckage like Lilliputians capturing Gulliver.

The aftermath

So ended another day in Alsfeldt – its skyline forever altered. As the sun dipped below the horizon, my son stood – smiling like the conquering hero – on a mountain of rubble.

A few days later two hi-hoes and a pair of dump trucks had most of the mess cleaned up within 12 hours. Today there's little evidence that the silo ever existed. It's amazing what perseverance can accomplish, along with a lot of dynamite and considerable prayer, of course.

The message for me is clear (my own big bang theory): sometimes, rather than giving up, the best thing to do is call in a skilled workman – one with the resources and experience to do what we cannot.

Heidi Vander Slikke (vanderslikke@everus.ca) lives in Harriston, On.

blog: (n) short for weblog, a website containing an online journal with reflections, comments and links.

Christian Courier gives you a glimpse into current Reformed thinking by presenting excerpts from some of today's top blogs. Blogs are usually free-association and may not conform to the standards of print publications.

http://forsclavigera.blogspot.com/

Tuesday, May 18, 2010

Interview: On Christian Scholarship (and Teaching)

One of my students, Jasmine Wilson, is a program assistant for our "Honors Floor" here at Calvin College – a "living-learning" community in one of the dorms. I've known Jasmine since before she arrived at Calvin: we corresponded when she was a student at a classical high school in Oregon and was already reading my work and stuff by Stanley Hauerwas and others. So it was a treat to have Jasmine come to Calvin and to watch her develop. (She blogs a bit over at The Other Journal.)

As part of one of her courses on Christian scholarship, Jasmine interviewed me about the vocation of being a Christian scholar, which also morphed into a conversation about the overlap between scholarship and teaching. Some might be interested to read the interview (http://jazimomo.wordpress.com/2010/03/19/interview-with-james-k-a-smith-scholarship-and-teaching/).

Here's a snippet:

JW: Because you are so interdisciplinary in some ways, the big thing at the January Series was that your work is, "at the borderlands between philosophy and theology, ethics, aesthetics, science, and politics."

Jamie Smith: Which, by the way, just kind of means I'm a dilettante. (laugh)

JW: So how do you think that affects your work? Do you see that as beneficial to be in so many different ponds in a way? [If I were to re-ask this question I don't think I would use the term "beneficial"].

Jamie Smith: I think it's necessary for somebody to be doing that. Whether it's beneficial … well I am grateful that my scholarly formation was in a discipline. And it's really in philosophy, although I think I could hang with about anybody who had a theology PhD as well to some degree. And actually my PhD program, I was able to do a little bit of cross disciplinary work, so I was able to take courses in the theology department and I had theologians on my dissertation committee. So I'm grateful that I did learn to dot my I's and cross my T's within a philosophical discipline.

And that it was philosophy is exactly what enabled me to be able to lean out and start to absorb what's going on in other discourses. That will sound really snobby, but to be honest, I think because philosophers ask the most foundational questions they're also able to discern the sort of foundational issues in other disciplines. I don't think that necessarily works for other disciplines.

The problem with the multi-disciplinary stuff is there aren't clear lines of accountability for your work anymore. So in philosophy you submit to peer review in the discipline. For this kind of work, who would be the peers that you would be reviewed by? So increasingly what happens in the arena of evaluation is how it's received. And that makes me nervous a little bit. I think it especially makes specialists nervous. I view interdisciplinary work as a kind of necessary evil (chuckle). I think the nature of the sort of things we're grappling with requires us to do that.

Posted by James K.A. Smith

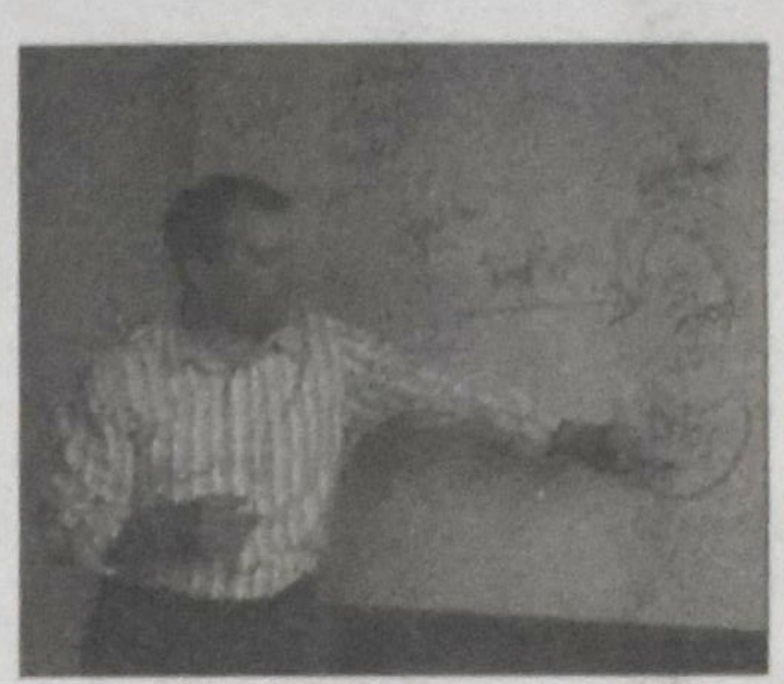
Sunday, May 16, 2010

Notes for a Book I'll Never Write

Hitchens

A couple of years ago a publisher invited me to enter the fray of the "new atheism" debates. I was tempted for a very brief moment, largely because I would have enjoyed reading Hitchens against himself – reading Hitchens the earlier literary critic & independent political commentator against the later Hitchens as secular fundamentalist whose critiques of religion are about as nuanced and studied as Sarah Palin's foreign policy. But in the end I'm glad I passed.

Since then, of course, we've seen a spate of such Christian responses, ranging from sharp and brilliant (esp. those by Terry Eagleton and David Bentley Hart) to a larger subset that fail before they even begin, largely because they play the games according to the new atheists' rules. And since that's a loaded game, the house always wins. It's very hard to play evidentialist tit-for-tat with scientism and come out looking like a winner.



James K. A. Smith
Professor of Philosophy, Calvin College; Executive Director, Society of Christian Philosophers

If I were to ever pen a volume in the ballpark of these debates (which I won't), I'd want to call into question the terms of the debate itself. That is, I'd want to try to put the secular fundamentalist (e.g., Dawkins, Hitchens) back on his heels by trying to show the extent of his own religion, the extent of his own deep faith commitments, his fundamental trust in a story about the world (whether that story be liberalism or naturalism or what have you). In short, the move would be to first call into question the very suggestion that there's a distinction between the religious and "the secular." The goal would be to push the secularist to the point of that Wittgensteinian bedrock at which his spade is turned and he has to confess, "This is simply what I do." Here we'd hit upon the secularist's prayer and confession: this is what I trust, this is what I believe – this is my confession, my religion.

Then the playing field is leveled: it's no longer a matter of the "rational," secular scientist pointing up the irrationalism of the "religious" believer. Rather, it's always already an inter-religious dialogue. The secular is religious.

That's not the end of it, of course: there's still much to be discussed once we've framed it in these terms. And there's nothing to say that his guarantees a "win" for the Christian. But we would have succeeded in shifting the terms of the debate by shifting the burden of proof and undercutting the supposed "upper hand" of the secularist. Then we'd be in a place for dueling stories.

Posted by James K.A. Smith

Thursday, May 13, 2010

A Reformed Spirit: Cognac

Louis XIII cognac

My friend, Mark, blessed me with a wonderful coffee table book that celebrates one of my passions (and guilty pleasures): cognac. *Cognac: A Liquid History* is a lush, glossy work by a collector and connoisseur, recounting the history of the spirit and providing an overview of 30 houses, along with vintage notes.

But it made my Reformed heart sing when I learned of the good Calvinist heritage of this, my favorite spirit. The trade, Calabrese notes, was expanded by the Huguenots, supported by their Protestant contacts in Amsterdam, London, and even the cities of Copenhagen and Hamburg. The Edict of Nantes, in effect, helped to secure these deals. The main towns in the region, including Cognac, Jarnac, Segonzac and, nearer the coast, La Rochelle, were Calvinist strongholds, as were many of the families who developed the burgeoning trade, such as the Delamains and Hines of Jarnac, the Augiers and Martells of Cognac (p. 46).

Given that Scots Presbyterians also blessed us with single malt scotch, you might wonder whether there's something in Calvinism that drives one to drink!

Posted by James K.A. Smith

THE PUBLIC SQUARE
Harry Antonides

Is Christianity dying in the West?

It is now commonplace to assume that Christianity is a dwindling force in the West. And rapidly declining numbers of adherents and church attendees confirm that assumption. James P. Gannon, writing in *USA Today*, headlined his article "Is God Dead in Europe?" He began:

We are in Prague, the lovely and lively capital of the Czech Republic, where the bars and cafes are full, the glitzy crystal and art shops are busy, and the dozens of historic cathedrals and churches are largely empty – except for gawking tourists snapping photos. In The Prague Post..., *a front-page article reports, in titillating detail, how the city has become Europe's new capital for pornographic film-making while an op-ed examines why only 19 percent of the people in this once religious country believe that God exists.*

This brief paragraph brilliantly connects the dots between civilizational decadence and the loss of faith in God.

Politics in the "Naked Public Square"

Gannon points out that many surveys in Europe show that there is a sharp drop-off in church attendance and religious practice. In five key countries (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy) regular church attendance since 1970 has dropped from about 40 percent to about half that.

George Weigel, author of *The Cube and the Cathedral: Europe, America, and Politics without God*, writes that Western Europe has become a "post-Christian" society in which many of the leading elite are anti-religious or "Christophobic." When the new constitution for the 25-nation European Union was debated, the drafters rejected all proposals to include a reference to the Christian faith, on the ground that such mention would be exclusionary and offensive to non-Christians.

Former French president Valery Giscard d'Estaing, who presided over the drafting process, explained, "Europeans live in a purely secular political system, where religion does not play an important role." The final text of the constitution made mention of "Europe's Religious and Humanist inheritance."

Subsequently, Italy's nominee for justice minister of the EU, Rocco Buttiglione, was rejected because of his Christian faith. He warned, "If we ignore our pasts and try to create a godless society where things like money or ambition or property are worshiped, then the society loses.... It is a battle we are fighting at the current time."

Suicide, not murder

In a 2005 *USA Today* article, Noelle Knox quotes a study of a Center at the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, which states that every major religion except Islam is declining in Western Europe. This study finds that this decline is most evident in France, Sweden and the Netherlands, where church attendance has dropped to less than 10 percent in some regions.

Pope Benedict XVI has lamented the weakening of the churches in Europe, Australia and the U.S. Addressing Italian priests, the Pope said, "There is no longer evidence for a need of God, even less of Christ. The so-called traditional churches look like they are dying."

The catch-all term for the de-Christianization of Europe is secularization – the belief that there is no God. There are a host of indicators that life in Europe has become more and more secularized, with devastating effects on social structures, especially the family. (For the complete story – confirming Arnold Toynbee's credo "Civilizations die from suicide, not murder" – see Mark Steyn's *America Alone*.)

Amazing Grace

So let me answer the question in the title of this article. Sadly, it is true that many are turning their backs on Christianity. But the truth of that faith, as revealed in the Bible, and foremost in the life and teaching of Jesus, will never be defeated. If we have eyes to see, we can see signs of Christ's present and coming kingdom everywhere. Let me conclude with an amazing, living proof of that kingdom bringing peace and reconciliation in the most unlikely places.

Mosab Hassan Yousef is the son of Sheik Hassan Yousef, a founding member of the terrorist organization Hamas. He became deeply involved in the activities of this organization, then changed sides and worked for the Israelis, always at great risk to his life. But the most wrenching yet liberating change came when he turned his heart over to Jesus. He now lives in America, and published his book *Son of Hamas*. This is a riveting story of intrigue and danger, but above all of turning away from a life of hatred and violence to one marked by love and peace. Here is a small sample of the author's powerful testimony:

The message of Jesus – love your enemies – is what finally set me free. It no longer mattered who my friends were or who my enemies were; I was supposed to love them all. And I could have a loving relationship with a God who would help me love others.

Having that kind of relationship with God is not only the source of my freedom but also the key to my new life. (pp. 248-9)

Read this book; pass it on, especially to your children. It will lift your spirit away from the bad news we are inundated with. Above all, remember these words of Jesus:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27).

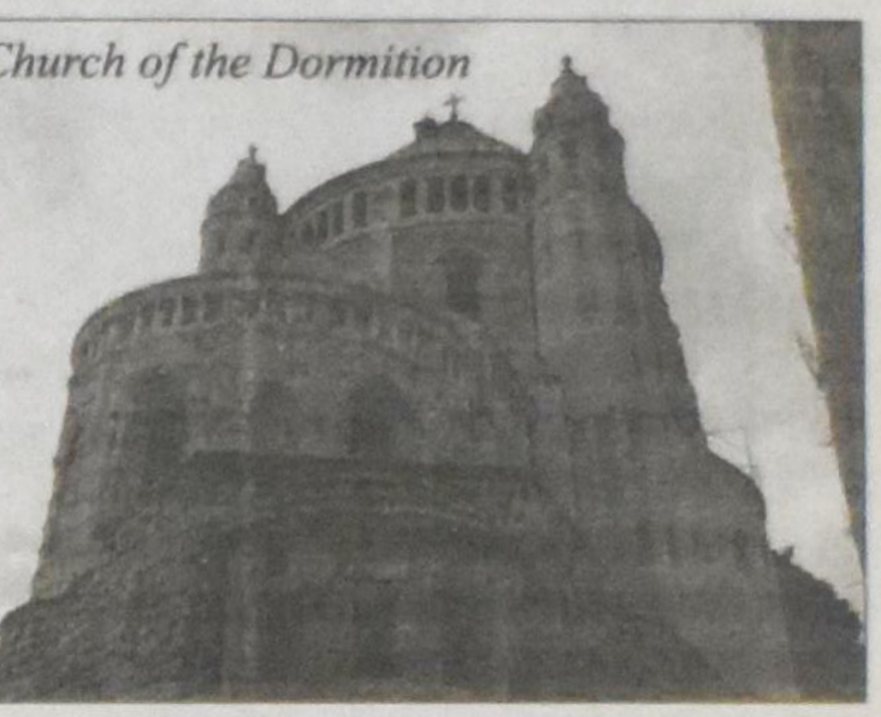
Harry Antonides (hantonides @sympatico.ca) retired as director of the former Work Research Foundation. He lives in Willowdale, Ontario.

Christ @ Culture
Lloyd Rang

The former things have passed away

It happens before you know it.

One day, you're wondering what you're going to do with your life. The next day, you wonder what you did with it. One day, you are weightless like a balloon filled with air. The next you are thick and heavy as a hot water bottle. One day, you're looking forward at all the gadgets on the horizon. The next day, you're looking at one of your old toys in a vintage store. That last one happened to me, the other day.



Church of the Dormition

My son and I were in an antique store. Something on a table caught his attention.

"Dad!" he whispered loudly. "What's THAT?" It was an old Underwood typewriter. The kind I had learned to type on, back in the 1970s. (To this day I still type so heavily my co-workers close my office door when I'm pounding the keys). Cameron stood before it as though it were some Victorian mechanical monster – some unpredictable clockwork steampunk robot or ancient, compact threshing machine, maybe. His hand hovered just above the shiny green keys, unsure of whether to press down.

So I showed him how the keys work. And how to push the carriage return. And where the ribbon of ink goes. And he was fascinated.

"We gotta get one of those, Dad!"

And I thought about it, too, until I saw the price. Apparently, old typewriters are rare now, and expensive. So, the Underwood is still in the store, if you want it.

That experience got me to thinking about the other things that are relics of the past. And so I started to compile a list:

Saturday morning cartoons

Why they were great: I thought I was getting away with murder. My parents got to sleep in. But I got up at 6 a.m. every Saturday morning to watch *Scooby Doo, the Flintstones, Superfriends* and other great shows. I'd sit there for hours, all by myself, with a big bowl of cereal. It was "my" time.

What killed them: Cable all-cartoon stations. When you can get shows like *Ben 10* and *Spongebob Squarepants* and *Johnny Test* on demand, who needs Saturday morning cartoons? (A generation of kids who don't appreciate the genius of *Looney Tunes*, that's who. But I digress.)

Mail

Why it was great: Not only because the mailman drove the dog nuts. Not only because girls in beehive hairdos sang songs about the postman. But because there's something wonderful and solid and real about getting an actual letter in the mail from someone who took all that time just to talk to you. When I was 16, a girl wrote me a letter written on the cutout letters of my name. It remains one of the most romantic things anyone has ever done for me, because it was sweet and kind and lovely and took time.

What killed it: Email, text messaging and social networking. And while many people think that the ability to instantly communicate means we have better communication, consider the difference between crafting a letter and thumbing out a text message. One takes time and effort and thought and care. The other takes opposable thumbs and an average-length bathroom break.

Whistling

Why it was great: It was an ART, that's why. You first had to learn how to do it – how to put your lips together and blow. Then you had to learn technique – how to whistle by sucking in air, or make a warble or trill by puffing out your cheeks. Then you had to make music – you had to bring the notes alive. But if you could do it well – like certain old Dutch contractors I used to work for in the summer – you could entertain yourself and those around you with a skill and music that were timeless.

What killed it: the Walkman, the Discman and finally, the iPod. When a whole music library fits in the palm of your hand, what's the point in carrying one around inside your head? Of all the things on this list, this is the one I miss the most.

And I could go on. There are rotary telephones, paper calendars, photographs, slides, low definition TV, AM and FM radio, the 6 o'clock news, the national anthem being played before movies in the theatre, LEGO sets that were just blocks and not kits, CDs … all of them gone, or disappearing slowly and inexorably, taking with them all the habits and rituals we form around them – like pressing the radio up to your ear at night, under the covers, to listen to the game.

And all of this can make you feel old, fast. And make you feel like the world is in an awful hurry to change, and erase not only you, but the things you find important. It's easy to feel like nothing lasts. And that everything we hold dear today will simply be gone tomorrow.

Continued on next page

On racism

Berta Hosmar

In a recent article, editor Brett Alan Dewing wrote that he feels that racism in his generation is almost non-existent, but that people over 50 may almost always be guilty of harbouring a form of racism. This article made me think, and I wondered if I am also a racist, being a senior.

My parents, who were middle-aged when they came to Canada from Holland in the nineteen fifties, never gave us children the impression that we were superior to people with a different skin colour. But we also never came in contact with black- or brown-skinned people in Holland.

The only time I can remember hearing a racist remark in our home was when our seamstress, who came to our home one day a month to do the necessary sewing, held up a piece of polka-dotted fabric for us to see. "I bought this at that store, owned by Mr.Samuel, you know the Jew who survived the war with his family because kind folks risked their lives, hiding them in their attic for years. It's kind of dark in that store, and when I came home I noticed that there are several tiny holes in this material." Indeed, the holes were clearly visible. "Guess what, he wouldn't take it back!" "That's a typical *Jodenstreek* (Jewish trick)," my mother said.

Coming to Canada we met people with brown or black skin, but who were we to feel superior? After all, we were immigrants, and on rare occasions some of us had been called "DPs" (displaced persons) by folks whose forefathers had lived in this country for generations.

But racism here was alive and well, especially among older people.

Some years ago I visited an elderly gentleman whose hatred for Jews was evident. He was a member of The Roman Catholic Church but showed little understanding of the words of Jesus: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

"Those Jews, don't have anything to do with them," he told me once. "Christ-killers, that's what I call them."

"But Jesus was also a Jew," I tried to argue with him, but that did not change his opinion.

The time came that he had to undergo some minor surgery. When I visited him again he was still fuming when I asked him how his stay in the hospital had been. "They sent a black nurse to bathe me, but I told her to get the h--- out of my room and to send a white nurse. The head nurse even came and talked to me, but I won!"

I assumed that, because of his advanced age, they had humoured him.

Was I racist?

I cannot say that friends my age are racists, but maybe the subject has never come up. I also considered myself blameless, until I came into contact with a family that had come from Pakistan. When our last child had left home I worked for a few years as a part-time Red Cross homemaker, and this family had been assigned to me. The mother needed some personal care, and she was very quiet but pleasant.

The husband, however, was not friendly at all and was almost hostile when he spoke to me. He did not leave the house until I was finished, and I got the unpleasant feeling that he did not trust me. Trying to get a conversation going with him proved to be useless. He barely answered me, and I decided it had to do with his cultural background.

Years later, when dollar stores were becoming increasingly popular, I had the same experience. I occasionally visit dollar stores here and there, and sometimes the staff comes from Pakistan. I noticed that several staff members would not greet the customers. They would silently take the merchandise and hand it over after you had paid. The only words you heard from them was how much you owed. It was not that some of them could not speak the language, for I heard them talking to their co-workers in fluent English. I decided to be extra friendly to them, to see if they would respond, but to no avail. Again I concluded that it must be their cultural background.

So I was definitely a racist, for I decided that

Continued on page 18

A sense of timelessness

But I want to tell you something. As I write this, I am in Jerusalem. It is dark in the city, but I can see the old walls, lit up at night. I am just a few blocks away from the Church of the Dormition – built on the site where, according to tradition, Jesus and his Disciples ate the last supper. On the walls of that church you can see graffiti left behind by pilgrims who risked their very lives to come to the Holy Land some 700 years ago.

Just down the street are the ruins of the wall around the city built by King Hezekiah. The ruins are over 3000 years old. And at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, you can put your hand on the very place that tradition says the cross of Calvary stood.

Being here, in this city, I do not feel as though my time is short, or inconsequential. Surrounded by all this history, all these antiquities, I feel a weird paradox. It's as though my life, though very short, matters very much. And at the same time, that very brevity saddens me.

And I can't help thinking that God understands that, too. Because he took mortal form, and he understands our sorrows – no matter how small or petty. He knows that the passage of time troubles us.

But he also stands outside time. When you walk around Jerusalem, you get this marvelous, real, tangible sense of a story that has played out over thousands of years. You get to appreciate the very long view of human history that God enjoys. And you see time, just for a moment, the way that he must, too.

How he must see our short lives, here, in contrast with his long plan of redemption – and, above all, the promise of eternal life.

One day, you are riding a bike. The next, you are driving an accessibility scooter.

One day, you are learning to read the hands of the clock. The next you are struggling how to tell time.

One day, your time is up.

The very next moment, time doesn't matter, ever again.

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) is a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville, Ontario.

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra

Blessed be Your Name

I went shopping yesterday. Shampoo was on the list, so I went searching for some. I'm not a shampoo expert, so while I stood in front of the various shampoos boasting their various strengths, I ended up reaching for the one that said "40 percent more." That seemed like my kind of shampoo.

Soon I will be graced with 40 percent more children, 2 boys. One of those boys, Isaac, has never seen his father. His father was killed before he was born. Isaac is full of energy, mischievous curiosity and boundless love. He has been given grace.

When we were standing in church last week we were singing "Blessed be Your Name," a song by Matt Redman. "Blessed be Your Name" is a fairly recent song from 2005, and the words of the song are deep, penetrating and scriptural. Often those who argue against newer worship music say the lyrics are filled with more fluff than content. "Blessed be Your Name" is not one of those songs. It is considered by many to be a song that could be an even match for any traditional hymn vs. praise and worship song debate.

Matt Redman, an English singer/songwriter in his mid 30s explains the song this way: "all over the Bible, there are people making choices to worship God in hard times. One of the prophets says the harvest hasn't been good, yet I will praise the Lord. 'Blessed be Your Name' is mainly rooted in Job, where right at the beginning of Job, in the beginning of the devastating season in his life, he says 'the Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.'"

Done well, the song can be a powerful, throne-ascending means to worship. This Sunday morning it was done well. Five-year-old Isaac and I were sitting behind some taller people, and while he was standing on the floor, he couldn't see the words on the screen. I lifted him up, and he stood on the back of the chair in front of us. He leaned back against me, my arms around him and our heads at the same level, worshiping together, singing "Blessed be Your Name."

Blessed be your name
In the land that is plentiful
Where your streams of abundance flow
Blessed be your name

Blessed be your name
When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed be your name

Blessed be your name
When the sun's shining down on me
When the world's 'all as it should be'
Blessed be your name

Blessed be your name
On the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering
Blessed be your name

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be the name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be your glorious name.

You give and take away
You give and take away
My heart will choose to say
Lord, blessed be your name

There stood two people. One of the two has never met his earthly father. One who watched his dear wife die of cancer at 33. Both were standing in a worship service, in the middle of their community, surrounded by people who love and care for both of them singing about the Lord giving and the Lord taking away. Both who have experienced the Lord giving and taking, not necessarily in that order. Both who are testaments that Joy can come in the morning. And that Joy can come in the mourning.

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization supporting adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in St. Catharines, Ont.

Classifieds

Birth

With thankfulness,
we thank God for the safe arrival of a son

Daniel Peter – 8 lbs. 13 oz.

for Mark and Sara **Hanemaayer**
a brother for Hailey
second grandchild for Doug & Pat Ransom and
seventh grandchild for Bert & Agnes Hanemaayer.

Address: 107 Hudson Crescent
Bradford ON L3Z 2Y7

Birthdays

Great is God's Faithfulness!

The family of

Willie Rietema

are thankful to the Lord for
all the wonderful years that God has granted her.
Willie will be celebrating her **80th Birthday** with
family and friends on Sunday, June 20, 2010.

From the family:
Neil, loving husband of Willie
Ben & Grace Rietema
Sy & Grace Bennik
Ron Rietema (at home with the Lord)
Winn Rietema
Marcel & Deb Oostenbrink
Fred & Linda Baong
21 grandchildren
6 great-grandchildren &
5 foster great-grandchildren

Thanks be to God!

Address: Box 29
Bentley AB T0C 0J0
e-mail: willie@telus.net

Happy Birthday to **Maria Van Eyk**
who will celebrate her **80th Birthday**
on June 29, 2010.

Congratulations, Mom, from
Sylvia & Bill van Wyngaarden
Elaine & Dirk van Wyngaarden
Peter Van Eyk & Alison Pettigrew
and Best Wishes, Oma, from
Bethany van Wyngaarden, Mallory van Wyngaarden
Adam & Clare van Wyngaarden,
Lucas van Wyngaarden & Amy Carswell,
Karen & Jeff Gorter
and Chelsey Pettigrew and
a very special Happy Birthday from Kyra Gorter

Please join us for an **Open House Celebration**
on Saturday, June 26, 2010 from 2 - 4 p.m.
at Hope Christian Reformed Church
64 Buchanan Crescent, Brantford

Best wishes only please.

Home address:
35 Avondale Street
Brantford ON N3S 4L7

Anniversary

1970 St. Catharines — 2010 Thunder Bay

Grateful to God for his many blessings

CYE AND CATHY YPMA (Timmermans)

celebrate **40 years of Marriage**
July 4, 2010

with their children and grandchildren:
Karen & Erik Meinders – Carmen, Serenity, *Mission BC*
Steve & Sylvia, *Duluth GA*
Barbara & Jeff Pike – Simantha, *Lefroy ON*

An **Open House**
to celebrate this occasion and say farewell
is planned for July 10 from 2 - 4 p.m. in
the Fellowship Hall of Thunder Bay First CRC.
Best wishes only.

Address as of July 15, 2010: 9 James Street
BARRIE ON L4N 6M4

Anniversaries

1950 Oosterwolde, Fr.

May 30 — 2010 Abbotsford, BC

It is with joy and thankfulness to God
that we announce the **60th Wedding Anniversary** of

POPKE AND JANTJE VEENBAAS (nee Haisma)

We are reminded our God's faithfulness to us through the lives of our parents, especially in their commitment to God and to each other. While they were dating and far apart from each other, Dad in Indonesia and mom at home in the Netherlands, they separately chose the same verse to foundation their relationship to each other – Romans 8:28. And over the years, in joy or in sorrow, God has blessed this commitment. When Mom and Dad came to Canada on their honeymoon sixty years ago, trekking across this beautiful land all the way to Mission, BC, they had no idea what life would bring, but they trusted God would walk with them. Over those sixty years they have lived in various locations in the Fraser Valley, eventually running their own family farm. God is good. We love you Pake and Beppe!

Blessings, from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren:
George and Pam Veenbaas, *Mission BC*
Mike and Kyla (Kiersten, Jenessa),
Lisa and Lance (Tanner, Samantha),
Brenda and Jeff (Cameron, Aaron)
Sid and Winny Veenbaas, *Matsqui, BC*
Justin and Marissa, Jenna, Matthew
Jane Flore, *Abbotsford, BC*
Ryan, Derek and Suzanne, Chris
Ray and Marian Veenbaas, *Abbotsford, BC*
Joshua
Grace and Len Van Harten, *Thorndale, ON*
Rachel and Aron, Heather and Steve,
Emily and Aaron, Jonah
Fred Veenbaas, *Abbotsford, BC*
Jacqui and Dave, Mark

Home address: 302 - 35230 Delair Road
Abbotsford BC V3G 2W5
Phone: 1.604.854.3021

50th Anniversary

GERALD AND NELLY KORTEN

Niagara Falls 1960 * June 30 * 2010 Dunnville

We thank God for his faithfulness to you
and His blessings through 50 years.

We invite you to
Come celebrate with us at the
Open House 2:00-4:00 p.m.
July 3, 2010 at Bethel CRC
17 Robinson Road, Dunnville
Best Wishes Only

With love from your children and their spouses,
grandchildren & great-grandchildren:

Marjorie & Ed Hoekstra and family, *Dunnville*
Bernie & Wendy Korten and family, *Dunnville*
Ray & Laurie Korten and family, *Dunnville*
Betty-Ann & Jim DeBoer and family, *Smithville*
Nancy & Glen VanderVelde and family, *Carman, Man.*
Gerald & Holly Korten and family, *Norwich, ON*

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Personal

Gentleman would like to correspond with Christian lady (55-65).
Reply to: File 2770
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Man in Toronto area would like to meet lady between 48 and 55 years old. Interests include outdoors, theatre and family.
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c/o Christian Courier
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Classifieds

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Obituaries

HENDRIKA BERGSMA (Hofsteenge)

On Friday, May 14, 2010 Hennie went home to be with her Lord and Savior, peacefully at home in her 82nd year.

Beloved wife of Tom Bergsma of Strathroy for 54 years and loving mother of Joyce Power (Brian), Neil (friend Corinne), Ron (Ivan) and Oma to Chris, Patrick and Jade. Predeceased by son Tommy (1967) and survived by two sisters in The Netherlands.

A memorial service was held in the East CRC in Strathroy on Tuesday May 18, 2010. Philippians 4:13 "*I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*"

Donations to the Canadian Cancer Society or Strathroy Community Christian School in memory of Hennie would be appreciated by the family.

Address: Tom Bergsma, 221 Southfield Dr
Strathroy ON N7G 3V3

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!"
Psalm 118:24

JOHAN "JOHN" STROOBACH

passed away peacefully in his sleep on May 15th, 2010.

Loving husband of Lydia Stroobach; father of Jerry & Liz, Gabe & Evelyn, Erwin & Angelique, Evelyn & Chris; grandfather of Mark, Leigh, Lindsay, Joshua, Janie, Jeremy, Jesse, Dinalyn, Alicia, Shannon, Nathan, Benjamin; great-grandfather of Taryn & Aleah.

Also survived by brothers and sisters in Holland: Jan Stroobach, Adri & Dick Schoen, Ann Stroobach, Eva & Thym DeRaaf, Leo & Nel Stroobach, Martha Stroobach.

A service was held on Monday, May 17th. Condolences received at www.MacCoubrey.com

CLARENCE BIL

(Dec 26, 1935 - May 16, 2010)

Gone to be with Jesus in his Eternal Home on Sunday, May 16, 2010, Clarence, in his 75th year.

Beloved husband of Margaret.
Dear father of Terry (Janet) and the late Leonard (1983).
Loving Grandpa of Jacqueline and Brandon.

Brother of Roy (Mary), Grace (John), Brenda (Jack), the late Cor (Pamela), Sally (Jacob), Leo (Anne), Harry (Jeannette), Garry (Joan), William, Lori (John), and Ann (Pete).
Also survived by brothers and sisters-in-law Mary (Albert), Sylvia (the late John), Hilbert (Dora), Shirley (Ron), Bill (Emmy), Greta (John), Jane (Gilbert), Wilma (Hans), Rose (James), Dick (Evelyn).

Correspondence address: Margaret Bil, 1080 Joan Drive, Burlington ON L7T 3H2

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Classifieds

Racism ..... *continued from p. 15*

people from Pakistan were basically unfriendly to strangers.

Sisters from a different mother country

But several weeks ago I changed my opinion, and I can now say that perhaps I'm not such a racist anymore, especially when it comes to people from Pakistan.

I was at a clinic to undergo some tests, for I had not been feeling well for several weeks. I felt rather depressed as I sat in the waiting room, and, because of my condition and some anxiety I felt about not yet knowing what was wrong with me, the room with its tile floor and bare walls seemed almost hostile to me.

There were two ladies present, who, as I found out, had come here from Pakistan, and several other staff members were brown-skinned. The ladies spoke to each other in a language I did not understand. When it was the turn of one of them to get her tests done, I tried to make conversation with the other lady, for the silence in the room oppressed me. She did not volunteer information, but she was friendly and answered my questions.

She told me she really missed Pakistan, that it would always feel that that country was home, "but all my children live here now, that's why I came here a few years ago."

A while later it was her turn to see the doctor, and I was left alone in the waiting room. After awhile the door opened, and she came out with a staff member whose skin colour was also brown. Her face was all smiles, and she impulsively embraced the other person.

"Praise the Lord, Oh praise the Lord!" she cried, "I worried for nothing!"

The staff member returned the hug with another: "Yes indeed, praise the Lord!"

"You must be Christians," I said, and both smiled at me and asked me if I was also a Christian. All of a sudden the room did not seem so cold and impersonal anymore. And I think that my opinion of people from Pakistan has somewhat changed that day.

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Events/Advertising

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June 16 Hollandse Dag 10:00 a.m. at First Christian Reformed Church, 310 Kingscourt Avenue, **Kingston**, ON Speaker: Rev John Klomps. Topic "Herinneringen uit mijn reizen"(Luistert U mee?) For Info call 613-546-5615

June 26, 27 Come celebrate the 50th anniversary of HCCS (formerly Athens Christian School). Contact www.hccs.ca or 613 498 4176.

July 1 Frisian Picnic starting at 11 a.m. at Pinehurst Lake Conservation Area, **Paris**, Ontario. Free admission.

Aug 22 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Jacob Kuntz will be preaching.

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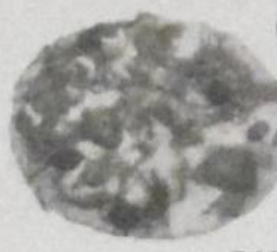

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Hollandse Dag

June 16 10:00 a.m. at
First Christian Reformed Church,
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Speaker: Rev John Klomps For info call **613-546-5615**

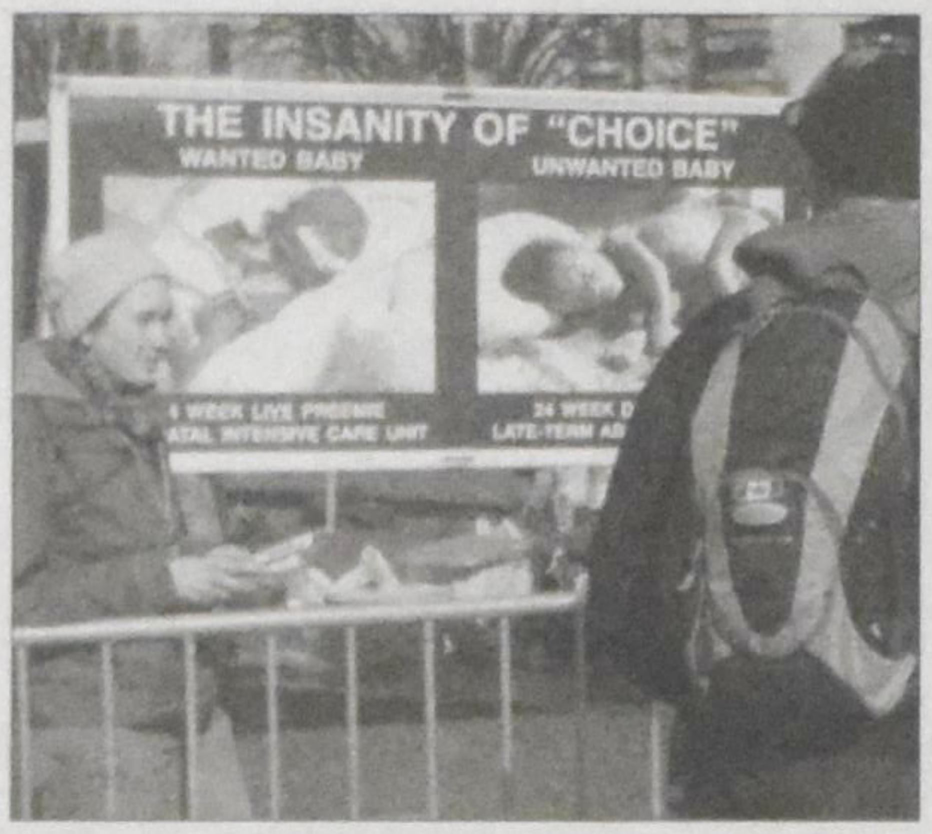
Odds and Trends: *The Follow-up Edition*

One step backwards

TORONTO, Ont. – A proposal to give two lanes of traffic over to bikes fell flat on May 12 ("Pedalling alternatives" *CC* May 10). It's a setback that might hamper other bike-friendly initiatives such as a city-wide bike rental program.

Although the proposed bike lanes had become a "political hot potato," according to one Councillor, the decision may not reflect the true feelings of a majority of City Council. More than one-third of Council was absent when the vote was taken, and one Councillor admits to accidentally voting against a proposal she had intended to support. Consequently, the bike lane plan lost 15-13, but since 17 Councillors (including Mayor David Miller) were missing, on any other day the outcome may have been different.

Pro-life students still hassled



CALGARY, Alberta – Eight students at the University of Calgary were found guilty May 5 of "non-academic misconduct," a term that also covers theft, arson and sexual assault. The eight perpetrators in this case did nothing more than set up a pro-life display on campus. Known as the Genocide Awareness Project (GAP), the display is admittedly controversial; it uses graphic pictures of dead bodies to compare abortion to historical genocides. In 2009, the University charged members of the Campus Pro-Life Group with trespassing when they set up the display despite being warned not to ("Censored on campus" *CC* March 9, 2009). These charges were later dropped when the administration could not clarify what rule or bylaw had been broken.

Currently, the eight students from April 2010's GAP "have been punished with nothing more than a warning," according to John Carpay, their acting lawyer. But if they continue to insist that free speech includes the GAP, they risk expulsion from a publicly-funded institution that says its mission is "to seek truth and disseminate knowledge."

Euthanasia bill defeated

OTTAWA, Ont. – Canadian parliament voted down the private members bill that would have legalized euthanasia and assisted suicide. More than three-quarters (228 to 59) of the House of Commons went against Bill C-384, the proposal that MP Francis Lalonde (BQ) has been pushing since May 2009 ("Do not go gentle" *CC* December 14, 2009).

The vote was delayed by prorogation last fall as well as by Lalonde's own actions in trading back the bill's second reading three times. Critics assumed she was trying to buy extra time to drum up support for C-384, but the bill was so vague that even pro-euthanasia MPs had concerns.

The bill's defeat is a victory for Christian groups like the Association for Reformed Political Action and the CRC's Disability Concerns. As Canada's population continues to age, however, this issue will likely resurface. Several politicians have already indicated that they would support a revised bill.

Meanwhile, "[t]his bill raises the opportunity for further dialogue in the church and in society about what makes a life worth living," emphasizes Rev. Mark Stephenson, director of Disability Concerns for the CRC. And Christians should be ready to join the dialogue by affirming "the intrinsic worth of every person not based on what he or she can do, but on who he or she is as an image-bearer of God."

– Angela Reitsma Bick

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